

elosyб

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

PUBLISHED BY

*Constable & Company Limited
London W.C.2*

BOMBAY

CALCUTTA MADRAS

*Oxford University
Press*

*The Macmillan Company
of Canada, Limited*

WHAT I REALLY WROTE
ABOUT THE WAR. BY
BERNARD SHAW

LONDON
CONSTABLE AND COMPANY
LIMITED

*First published in Limited Collected Edition 1930 and reprinted for
this Standard Edition in 1931*

All rights fully protected and reserved

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED, EDINBURGH

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

BEFORE THE WAR

Moral upset of the war. Reversal of values. Impossible to *planer au-dessus de la mêlée*. My own position. You cannot be impartial in a conflict between two pirate fleets if you happen to be aboard one of them. Balance of Power diplomacy. Bismarck's balance. How the Kaiser tried another balance and thereby brought the Encirclement on himself. The admission of Russia into respectable political society in the west. Neglect of foreign affairs by the proletarian parties. Count Harry Kessler's attempt to establish an *entente cordiale* between England and Germany. Defeated by England's resolution to sink the German fleet. British Monroeism: the Command of the Seas. A glance ahead at the London Naval Armament Conference of 1930. The Kessler incident convinces me that the country is sleeping on a powder magazine, and turns my attention from domestic industrial questions to diplomacy. I propose the Locarno agreement twelve years before Locarno. Article on A TRIPLE ALLIANCE AGAINST WAR. Compulsory military service with citizen rights. A second article on THE PEACE OF EUROPE AND HOW TO ATTAIN IT. I suggest annual war sports on Salisbury Plain for satisfaction of blood lust and cultivation of the alleged virtues produced by war. Complete failure of my campaign. Infatuation of Lichnowsky, the German ambassador. Delicacy of my relations with my German friends. Germany attacks France and finds herself ambushed by the British Lion. I retire for two months to Torquay to study the situation.

PAGE I

CHAPTER II

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

Essay under the above title published as a supplement to The New Statesman of the 14th November 1914. Its text. In it I point out that if soldiers were wise they would shoot their officers and return home to mind their own business; that if citizens were wise they would refuse to pay for diplomatic wars; and that the possibility, however remote, of these things happening acts as an unmentioned limit to war; but, not foreseeing the Russian revolution of 1917, I dismiss this as too

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

much to expect from pugnacious human nature at present. My detachment as an Irishman from emotional English patriotism. The Junker a British institution no less than a German one. The Foreign Office a Junker Club. Militarist anti-Prussian propaganda in England since 1870. The Battle of Dorking. Amazing claims of Field Marshal Lord Roberts to a divine Mandate over the whole earth for the British Empire. Von Bernhardi our pupil in *Realpolitik*. I prophesy that the war will not do any of the things intended by the militarists. Militarism a bogus science. Our reputation abroad for hypocrisy. Difference between ourselves as reflected in foreign minds and in the looking glass. Unmasking of our batteries in 1914. Efforts of Lichnowsky and the Kaiser to escape from the ambush. Our zero hour sounded by the Sera-jevo assassination. Repeated appeals by Sazonoff to Sir Edward Grey to avert a war by declaring England's hand in the game. Sir Edward hides it until the war has irretrievably begun. We go into the war on the anti-German side; and Sir Edward then tells the House of Commons of the *fait accompli*. The nation, long irritated by Hohenzollernist military bluster, rises to his call to arms. Even our anti-militarist anti-Junker writers voice the British reaction against Potsdamnation, whilst our Imperialists jump at the opportunity to out-Potsdam Potsdam. Orgies of anti-Prussian vituperation, British self-glorification, official mendacity, and popular heroics. I appeal against them to courage and common sense. I shew that the official case for the war is not only ridiculous in view of facts and Foreign Office history, but that a much stronger case for the war and against Germany can be made by insisting on the truth. What encircled Germany might and should have done. Her mistake in disregarding Von Bernhardi's warning to secure an alliance with America before starting the world war. How she put herself morally in the wrong, and not only gave the British Imperialists their chance, but antagonized the democratic nationalists and internationalists as well. The German defence to this case quite valid as against the claims of our Foreign Office to moral superiority, but not as against the real case for democratic internationalism against conquistadoresque imperialism and "Deutschland über Alles." Belgium crucified between the two Powers. Unpreparedness the price of secrecy. Recruiting. What the Labor Party owed to the army. Obsolete tests for military service. Pauperizing the army. Wanted: Labor representation at the War Office. Medical exploitation of the emergency. The four inoculations. The War Office's bait of starvation. Delusive promises to recruits. Discussion shirked. The terms of peace. Natural limits to the duration of the war. Attitude of the brave. The ignoble

CONTENTS

attitude of cruel panic. The commercial attitude. Vindictive damages. Our Annihilationists. Why not kill the German women? The simple answer. The sensible people. German unity inviolable. Limits of foreign interference with national constitutions. Physician: heal thyself. The hegemony of peace. Europe conspiring with Asiatics and Africans against her own solidarity. The Russian Russians and their Prussian Tsar. I overrate the stability of Tsarism with the Russian peasantry. Balance of Power alliances always really Overbalance alliances. Driving capital out of the country. The Red Flag and the Black. A League of Peace. The case of the smaller States. The claims of Belgium. The Belgian refugees and the Unemployment problem. The General Strike delusion. The Disarmament delusion. America's example: war at a year's notice. The Security Will o' the wisp. The Church and the war. The death of Jaurès. Socialism keeps its head but divides the nations against themselves. The cathedral of Rheims. The fate of the glory drunkard. The Kaiser. Recapitulation of Common Sense

PAGE 22

CHAPTER III

THE HARD CASE OF BELGIUM

Common Sense not badly received at first. Its growth to a monstrosity in the imagination of the patriots later on. Its shocking effect on the amiable innocents who had swallowed the romantic official legends. Their ignorance of the fact that the Foreign Office had forced on Belgium a secret military arrangement by which we were to send troops into her territory with or without her consent, and she was to take our side in our contemplated struggle with Germany. Our seizure of American cargoes in the exercise of our Command of the Seas provokes the United States. We climb down and pay for the cargoes. Lord Balfour bids for the support of the American Jews by presenting them with Jerusalem for their Zion. The breakdown of neutrality: State after State is drawn into the war. A French Yellow Book gives away our pre-war anti-German diplomacy. I publish THE LAST SPRING OF THE OLD LION. Its text. Its mixed reception by lambs who liked to be called lions and lions who had been posing as lambs. I take up the cause of Belgium from the Belgian point of view and am repudiated by the atrocity mongers who are using Belgium as a stick to beat Germany and a picture to illustrate British chivalry. The Belgians promptly ask me to draft their appeal to the United States. I do so, and also address an OPEN

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

LETTER on their behalf to President Wilson. Its text. Belgium devastated by all the belligerents, including herself. Letter to Charles Sarolea on the same subject

PAGE III

CHAPTER IV

NONSENSE ABOUT NEUTRALITY

Belgian neutrality now a dead issue. Belgium's secret compacts with England before the war and with France after it. General belief in 1914-15 that the violation of Belgian neutrality by Germany was the cause of the war, and that we were fighting to re-establish it. I was not imposed on. I not only denied the specific case of Belgium, but dismissed neutrality in the political and military sense as a figment. Samples of the resultant controversy. Letter in reply to Professor Kirchwey. "There is no such thing as a breach of neutrality because there is no such thing as neutrality." I describe the Monroe Doctrine as balderdash. Exposure of the real motives of the war and the real attitude of the belligerents. Earlier letter dealing with the treaty of 1839 (the Scrap of Paper) and the limits to the validity of treaties in general. Belgium not a vacuum. Answer to a controversialist who saw the war as a Christian duty on our part. The Archbishop of York speaks like a gentleman and a Christian and is furiously denounced as a manifest traitor. Recklessness of the patriots as to the effect of their denunciations on public opinion at home or abroad. I offer suggestions (with samples) for combining invective against myself with discouragement to the enemy. Confirmations of Common Sense from the front benches in parliament

130

CHAPTER V

THE CASE AGAINST GERMANY

Apprehensions as to the effect of the ravings of our patriots on Italy and America, which were still holding aloof from the war. Voluntary recruiting in Trafalgar Square. I am offered the post of stage manager there. Instead, I indite an article stating the case against Hohenzollernism from the point of view of Germans settled in the United States, beginning with a disclaimer of all our official moral attitudes. Failure of the German system to produce military competence. Infant mor-

CONTENTS

tality in Germany higher than in England. Sacrifice of German education to Hohenzollernist idolatry. Royal encouragement of military insolence and duelling. Paranoia induced by excessive privilege. Germans submit for the sake of unity, prestige, and security. Reasons for doubting whether these goods are really delivered. Irresponsibility of deputy despots, the titular despot being obliged to support them at all costs. The sinking of the Lusitania invaluable to the Allies through its exasperation of British sentiment and its final effect in bringing in the United States on their side. Repetition by the Kaiser of the blunder made in 1870 by Napoleon III. The technically correct but psychologically idiotic execution of Edith Cavell. The pompous advertisements of the reign of terror in Belgium contrasted with the silence in which the armies of more democratically constituted States manage to do the same things. Junkerism, sacrificing everything to military efficiency, is not militarily efficient and is morally disastrous. The French Republican system and the English parliamentary system are manifestly superior in these respects. Ruthless supersession of incompetent officers possible only where caste and court favor do not count. Moral for German emigrants in America: do not support the system that drove you out of Germany. Mr Richard Bagot proposes to distribute in Italy half a million pamphlets setting forth the official reasons why Great Britain is at war with Germany. I write to *The Times* pointing out that the official reasons are for home consumption, and will neither deceive the Italians nor please them. I suggest a more ingratiating line of argument

PAGE 149

CHAPTER VI

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

Horror of the innocents at an English translation of a statement of the usages of war by the German general staff. In a review of this translation I point out that far from being, as alleged, a sort of Chinese pirates' handbook of atrocity, it goes beyond anything that is possible in war in its pious recommendations of chivalry, magnanimity, mercy, and scrupulous respect for the rights of prisoners, and that any experienced British officer would dismiss much of it as impracticable romantic sentimentality. Illustrative citations from British works on the subject. The *Berliner Tageblatt* retorts on our Pecksniffs by publishing a German translation of the report of the debate in the House of Com-

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

mons in 1807 when we "Copenhagened" the Danish fleet. This rebuke to self-righteous hypocrisy being obviously salutary, I dish the Tagblatt by publishing the debate myself in its original English. The text of it. Appeal to the belligerents to fight like gentlemen and stand by one another against the disorder and demoralization of the scurrilous cads and criminal elements who lacked only courage and leadership to become a lynching mob, and were misleading all the honest gulls who knew nothing of war or diplomacy, and thought the Germans must be wild beasts to kill British babies with bombs. The Chestertons strike out a romantic philosophy of history with an anti-Prussian moral. Their lack of real malice makes them harmless as propagandists of hatred; but they make their case so interesting that I am tempted into a friendly polemic under the heading CHESTERTONISM AND THE WAR. Cecil Chesterton yields to an impulse which I confess to have felt myself, and enlists. Our personal relations. Criticism of his book entitled *The Prussian Hath Said In His Heart*. A Protestant Northern character trying to operate a Catholic Latin theory. Special pleading against Frederick the Great. Royal atheists. Useless recriminations between pot and kettle. The real objection to physical torture. The utilitarian cruelty of the Germans and the English more dangerous than the voluptuous cruelties of the south. Cecil, fearing a premature armistice, writes another book called *The Perils of Peace*, and asks me to review it. I select his attacks on E. D. Morel as examples of the extravagance of war controversies, and his horror at the plague of typhus among English prisoners in Wittenberg, and the description of them by a German doctor as "English swine," as evidence of the onesided innocence of the realities of war displayed by many of our ablest civilians. Credulity as to German efficiency, information, and preparedness, persists in spite of its contradiction by the events of the campaign. No moral advantage to be gained by capping atrocities: those who live in glass houses should not throw stones. For instance, our own persecution of Germans, and even of the deserted English wives of Germans. The attacks on Lord Northcliffe and Mr Lloyd George. The shortage of munitions. Pseudo-patriotic clamor and vituperation advantageous to the enemy, who interprets it as "squealing." We should do nothing to make a post-war alliance with Germany impossible: "treat your friend as one who may some day be your enemy, and your enemy etc. etc."

CONTENTS

CHAPTER VII

EARLY WAR REPUTATIONS

Feeling in the northern Labor centres against "the Capitalist war." Ignorance of this in the south and in Fleet St. Extraordinary demonstration of sympathy at the funeral of Keir Hardie. Hostile reception of Mr Lloyd George on the Clyde. Resolutions approving my Common Sense pour in from the provinces. My appearances on the platform evoke no unpleasant demonstrations. Still the Press assumes, and the London suburbs believe, that the Labor leaders and all who venture to criticize our pre-war diplomacy are hunted fugitives, and that Mr Horatio Bottomley is left in exclusive command of the popular platform. I endeavor to explode this delusion, pointing out that the war could not be carried on for a single day if we were capable of nothing better than hysterics. Protest against Cabinet ministers making us appear bankrupt in character and ability by joining in the ravings of the Jingo mob. Appeal for moral courage and truth in justice to the really effective forces of the country

PAGE 206

CHAPTER VIII

COMPULSORY SOLDIERING

The institution of compulsory military service in 1916 puts an end to recruiting, and, incidentally, to the superstition that Englishmen are free. Conscientious objectors to war are nominally privileged to refuse service but really persecuted so rancorously that the results are sometimes fatal. Unequal administration caused by differences in good sense between the local military authorities. Similar variations between the Conshies, ranging from worthless slackers at one extreme to heroic martyrs at the other. The Act, an emergency measure with no considered legal character, simply makes every local military authority a pressgang, and creates a class of exempt persons without defining their qualifications or prescribing their treatment. Cases of gross ill usage and vindictive sentences. I appear at a court martial. Mr J. A. Hobson demonstrates that any further transfer of men from industrial work to the trenches will result in national insolvency. The Prime Minister (Mr Asquith) declares that this cannot be helped, and that we have no choice. I point out that this means that the Act has been forced on us by the French Government, which naturally objects to our not only

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

not sharing its insolvency but waiting to profit by it after the war. This begins the inevitable bickerings as to whether we are doing our fair share which goes on all through the war, and leaves us at the armistice on far worse terms with the French than with the Germans, with whom we had had no quarrels for four years, as fighting excludes quarrelling. Vain renewal of my appeals for a measure safeguarding the rights of citizen conscripts instead of simply handing them over to the slavery of military law

PAGE 213

CHAPTER IX

THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

Spiteful and senseless persecutions. Case of Mr Chappelow. System of offering educated objectors grossly unsuitable alternative non-combatant work, and on their refusal sending them to imprisonment made virtually perpetual by repeated sentences for the same offence. The Cabinet, though reproached for being a Government of Barristers, habitually violates every principle of law in its thoughtless opportunist legislation. The compulsion to fight for the country becomes compulsion to do whatever a military officer orders, no matter how intentionally insulting, degrading, injurious, or even impossible it may be, on penalty of perpetual imprisonment. Illustrations and comparisons. Case of Mr Rutland Boughton. Military decision that the work of a composer of music is "not of the least importance." Meanwhile a host of soldiers on leave from the trenches have to be musically entertained every day. Cases of Mr Stephen Hobhouse, Mr Clifford Allen, and Mr Clarence Norman. Fatal case of Mr Firth. Repeated sentences of two years hard labor are really sentences of death 223

CHAPTER X

JOY RIDING AT THE FRONT

I am invited to visit the front. I array myself in khaki. Camouflage defeated by the snow. I assist as a spectator at an artillery battle in which the firing is all on our side, the Germans having slipped away to the Hindenburg line. I share a moment of apparently deadly peril with the Commander in Chief and his Staff. We bolt. Grand display of contrivances for burning and poisoning the enemy. Interviews with Haig

CONTENTS

and Rawlinson. They prove too communicative to be reported. Popularity of Mr Ben Tillett at G.H.Q. The training camp at Étaples. Lessons in blood lust useful as comic relief. With Sir Almroth Wright in Boulogne. Beach Thomas's testimonial to the British soldier. Military drawbacks to American individualism. At Robert Loraine's flying camp. My published articles descriptive of my visit. French soldiers contrasted with German from pre-war observation. Ypres and its carillon before the war contrasted with Ypres after two years bombardment. I don the helmet of Mambrino. With Tomlinson at Arras. With Philip Gibbs near the Vimy ridge. The Somme front. Devastation extraordinary. Plenty of signposts but no villages. The technique of war. No two experts give me the same answer to the same technical question. Pretensions to precision of fire obviously unfounded: I offer to finish the war in two days if our gunners can really drop shells where I tell them to. The airman-duellist is the only instrument of precision: you do not have to send up a thousand of him to do the work of one as with bombs. Inefficiency of bombs when lateral effect is needed: they uncover the house but leave the walls standing. Wastefulness of firearms. Brains important, and hatred bad for brains. Consolations and responsibilities. I have to confess that I enjoyed my week in the field. The soldier on active service does not feel as the civilian at home does. He is mostly a devout Pacifist who recognizes that the only way to peace is through victory. Theories of war as a "biological necessity" cut no ice in the trenches. Demonstrations of the justice of the cause are more useful for recruiting than for service: no soldier will throw down his weapons and allow the enemy to kill him on moral grounds. Only as victor can he confess himself in the wrong with any credit. Every line of argument leads to victory as the supremely desirable end of the business. To that conclusion soldiers of all parties and creeds must come; consequently it matters little what parties they belong to or what creeds they profess when the war is only a diplomats' war. The destruction of towns and villages is not altogether to be deplored: most of them need destruction and reconstruction very badly. The curious fascination of peril. The soldier, though often almost unbearably uncomfortable, is not, compared to the civilian, unhappy. He escapes from money worries and the debasing egotism of continual preoccupation with commercial considerations. The responsibility for war rests not with the soldiers but with the statesmen. Some protests against my being invited to visit the front. Crushing official replies . PAGE 240

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

CHAPTER XI

CATACLYSM

The Russian soldiers take my advice and return home. Tsarism and Capitalism crash in Russia; and the derelict power is seized by Communist Soviets led by two able Dictators of the Proletariat, Lenin and Trotsky. British and French precedent is followed in the matter of regicide; but really revolutionary measures are taken in dealing with land, industry, education, and religion. Incidentally Russia makes peace with Germany; and popular indignation in England with this desertion (which is all we understand of the business) enables our Imperialists to wage a purely reactionary war on the Russian revolution. Estrangement of the new Russian Government from the parliamentary Labor Parties of Europe. Failure of the Russian leaders to grasp the extent of their own indebtedness to the break-up of the Russian army, and the impossibility of repeating their *coup d' État* in countries with intact constitutions, unbroken armies, and carefully paid-off demobilizations. Consequent isolation of Russia even in Socialist Europe. Sagacity of Lord Lansdowne, who sees that the war is going to smash the empires, and calls on his fellow-Conservatives to stop it. He is denounced as the agent of a German "peace offensive" and overruled; but he lives to see his fears justified. I review the situation in **THE FALLING MARKET IN WAR AIMS**. Not being anxious to save the empires I deprecate a hasty and indecisive dropping of the war. The Germans are all for peace and Lord Lansdowne, and thus contrive to take advantage of our repudiation of him to put us in the position of implacable belligerents bent on the destruction of a highly civilized Pacifist State. Mr Lloyd George's coalition Government ignorantly and snobbishly persists in treating the English Labor leaders as enemies of the country and pro-Germans. A series of attempts to discredit them by refusals of passports and the like culminates in a personal insult to Mr Henderson, who thereupon declines further co-operation with Mr Lloyd George, and takes the Labor Party with him. The Labor Party makes an independent declaration of the terms on which it will support peace with Germany. These terms pass through the Labor Conference as peace terms; but they are in fact terms which could be imposed on Germany only by victors. Mr Lloyd George, taken aback by the consequences of underrating Mr Henderson, swallows the Labor terms and is probably glad they are no worse. The revolt of the human conscience against the war. I warn those who are clamoring and threatening against a separate peace by

CONTENTS

Russia that what they really have to fear is a separate war by Russia against Capitalism everywhere. The Government suppresses the *Globe* newspaper for criticizing it, and forbids the export of an issue of *The Nation* for admitting the obvious success of the Germans in masking their retreat to the Hindenburg line. I address a letter to *The Nation* on the folly of this proceeding PAGE 271

CHAPTER XII

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

Collapse of the war in 1918. The German commanders throw up the sponge; and the Kaiser very sensibly retires to Holland as Napoleon III did to Chiselhurst. Undeterred by the fact that my previous utterances have produced no discoverable effect on events I publish PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS. Its text. Enter History: exit Romance. Survey of British diplomacy from 1906 to 1914: a story retold and completed. Fall of Mr Asquith and Sir Edward Grey. The Lion's Spring. The Blockade. Freedom of the Seas. Federal Republicanism succeeds to the Holy Roman Empire. The Coalition Royalists and President Wilson. Wilson as Charlemagne. The Irish Question. The League of Nations. Its romance and its reality. Anacharsis Klootz versus M. Léon Bourgeois. Indispensability of Germany to the League of Nations. Clemenceau's objection. The demand for Security. Disarmament Futility of economic boycott. Good manners in war and peace. The creed of Christian chivalry. Our full meal of vengeance. Atrocity mongering had better end. The peril of class war. My pamphlet has no effect. The Peace Conference does its worst. Pathological collapse of Wilson. Triumph over him of Clemenceau and the military experts, who dictate the new frontiers with the next war in view, and thereby make it inevitable 286

CHAPTER XIII

POST-WAR CONTROVERSY

Controversy much hotter after the war because the disputants are no longer terrified. Foch's professionally correct but politically foolish and impossible demand for security, and Mr Lloyd George's assent, provokes me to write THE COMING WAR WITH AMERICA. I point out that the security attained by the sinking of the German fleet is quite illusory as long as the American and Japanese fleets remain afloat. Thus we have

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

material for two first rate wars within the next twenty years. Sinking the French fleet with German assistance belongs to the same Security program. Need for domestic security also. Our disbanded soldiers, inured to violence and destruction, should be handcuffed. When the State which values its security most has annihilated all the other States, and its most Fochite citizen has exterminated all the other citizens, he will have nothing to fear except breaking his leg and having no surgeon left alive to set it. Indignation of my friend Henry Arthur Jones, who sees red. My answer to him. I raise the question of the employment of colored troops by European Powers in white wars, the French having quartered Senegalese soldiers in the Goethe House in Frankfort, and our own forces having been reinforced by Indian regiments. Mr Gilbert Chesterton remonstrates, mistaking my intention. I explain the gravity of the question, and point out the possibility of a crusade by negro converts to Bible religion to re-establish it in Europe. This perfectly serious warning passes as an extravagant joke for eight years, at the end of which it is put forward by Lord Birkenhead, and received with due respect

PAGE 356

CHAPTER XIV

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

Why I thought it unnecessary to attend the Washington Conference before writing about it. Its conclusions plainly predictable without experimental verification. Precedent of the Congress of Vienna, which never met. The real conference is always on the backstairs. America having gone dry, the established method of regaling delegates at banquets and giving them wine enough to overcome their discretion is not available on this occasion. English statesmen take care not to know their own intentions clearly enough to betray them. In their emotional moments it is a toss-up whether they will be sentimentally warlike or sentimentally pacific. But as the Balance of Power always regulates the proceedings finally, the effective business of diplomatic conferences is the search for advantageous alliances and bargains. Mailed fists will not be shaken this time, as we have had enough of war for the present. Disarmament, postulated by Mr Lloyd George as "the only road to safety," will be much discussed; and the end of every discussion will be "After you, sir." Blood and iron will still be the secret arbiter. "Unthinkable" wars nevertheless occur. Disarmament cannot stop war: disarmed men can fight as savagely as armed ones. It is the men

CONTENTS

who fight, not their weapons. Poison gas no worse than any other lethal device. "Preparedness" a delusion: the preparations are obsolete by the time the guns go off; and England has proved that an improvised army can tackle a permanent one. If the nations disarm the next war will be as probable as the last; and they will fight for the old reason that they are afraid of one another. For that reason too they will not really disarm. These depressing propositions are precisely confirmed by M. Briand at the third session of the Conference, and by Mr H. G. Wells's reports as eyewitness. The next war. Civilians, women, and children now come under fire with less protection than combatants. My difficulty in persuading the Press on this point. Editors, shocked at my mentioning such a thing, refused to call for the precautions I suggested until my point was driven home by the air raids on London. London cowering in darkness. Uselessness of pre-war Pacifist professions. Wilson, elected for having kept his country out of the war, had to lead his country into it. Irresistible suction of modern big wars. Helplessness of everybody when the first shot is fired. Reparations and indemnities are only plausible names for the plunder of the vanquished. Utter failure of the war to achieve the aims of any of its makers. Aggravation of all the international jealousies and terrors it was to have ended. Worse frontiers, less freedom, bigger armaments, capsized thrones, and sunken empires are the trophies of the diplomatists and patriots who held out the bait of precisely contrary results. Mr George Russell's comment is that the only prophet who has come out of the war with credit is Jesus Christ.

PAGE 367

CHAPTER XV

BURNING THE CANDLE AT BOTH ENDS

Riot of economic ignorance and incompetence after the war. Currency inflation rages throughout Europe. Ruin of pensioners and small rentiers. Incidental relief of agriculture and industry from the burden of mortgages and debentures paid off in worthless paper money. The competition of the American dollar forces the European States to stabilize their currencies. France takes advantage of the situation to repudiate eighty per cent of her war loan. Capitalist Russophobia. Proletarian sympathy with the Russian revolution produces a cry of Hands Off Russia, and frightens the British Government into dropping our war on it; but the anti-Bolshevik scare is hysterical enough to defeat the Labor Party and place a childishly reactionary Government in power.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Psychological effects of the war. Apparent exhaustion of the power or patience to theorize or construct. Epidemic of licentiousness does both good and harm. Dancing mania. Commercial boom follows the armistice and produces an orgy of overcapitalization. The commercial crash of 1921. The ruinous disregard of scientific principle in finance and industry elicits from me an article headed **THE PRACTICAL MAN OF BUSINESS**, calling attention to the disastrousness of such men as counsellors in affairs of State. How they wrecked the national organizations set up under the pressure of war. An extraordinary Press campaign denouncing all national enterprise as corrupt, inefficient, and extravagantly costly, gulls the people, and enables the Government to represent its sabotage of public activities, including education, as economy and retrenchment. The plunder of Germany takes effect in gratuitous imports of ships, steel, and coal, and threatens ruin to these British industries. We fail to realize that plunder means pauperization for the plunderer. Clamor for more inflation, again defeated by the American dollar. Clamor for taxation of capital, exploitation of credit, and other illusions of the city. Unprecedented taxation, half of which, however, is for interest on war loans, and, thanks to graduation of taxes on income and exemption of the poor, only a redistribution of income among the rentiers. The revolutionary Left of the Labor Party contrasts the order and efficiency of the war, when the German bayonet was at the throat of the Government, with the horrors of peace, and suggests that the same stimulus is available at home. Growing dissatisfaction with parliamentary methods. The reactionary Right is smitten by an unintelligent craze for exports, and pins its hopes on a revival of trade. Fallacy of the craze and vanity of the hopes. Trade is an expense, not an asset. The work of the war in forcing nations to depend on themselves and not on foreign trade cannot be undone. Rationalization will not cure unemployment: it will increase it unless its results are used to shorten the working day. Protection will be wrecked as before on the opposition of the overseas carrying trade

PAGE 389

CHAPTER XVI

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

I visit Geneva in 1928. Popular scepticism as to the usefulness of the League natural, but overdone. Need for distinguishing between the public proceedings at the Assembly of delegates and the unreported activities of the permanent departments. Except when some leading

CONTENTS

statesman makes use of the Assembly platform for a declaration of policy, its proceedings are negligible, consisting mostly of Pacifist oratory which is platitude at best and humbug at worst. The real centre of interest is the perpetual struggle of the secretariat and the International Labor Office to defeat the unceasing attempts of the constituent national Governments to sabotage the League through their temporary delegates, mainly by starving it, but also by voting against all its positive proposals, even when the nations are already committed to them. As the delegates may be scandalously ignorant of these commitments, and have only the vaguest notions of the constitution and objects of the League, being mere national party men, they are no match for the permanent heads of the departments, and are ignominiously flattened out in the committee discussions. But the constituent national Governments also try to fill the posts in the secretariat with diplomats who have no international aims and seek simply the advantage of their own countries. Effect of the Geneva atmosphere in countering this. Metamorphoses of party intriguers and Jingos into genuine and keen internationalists. A new supernationalist civil service. How even the delegates are educated and driven to bring their principals into line. The Labor Office, created to redeem a pledge given by President Wilson to Mr Gompertz, is otherwise unaccountable and theoretically indefensible, but practically invaluable to the proletarian cause and therefore most obnoxious to employers. Its constitution much less exposed to class manipulation than that of the secretariat, which it may possibly survive and even supplant. For the present the League must be regarded as holding its own by the sheer force of its Idea, and the zeal inspired thereby in its staff, in the teeth of the inveterate nationalism and consequent angry disaffection of all its most powerful constituents. Repeated efforts of the great Powers to escape from the Covenant of the League, which forbids them to go to war without pleading their case before it. All these attempts are camouflaged as steps towards universal peace. For example, Locarno. How Mr Kellogg was humbugged into securing for the nations the right to go to war on their own account in self-defence: that is, whenever it happens to suit them. Germany's contention that she went to war in 1914 in self-defence unanswerable. M. Briand's warning that the next world war may not be between nations or alliances of nations but a war of proletarians of all nations against capitalists of all nations. The tendency of the great Powers to slight the League by sending second or third rate party careerists to represent them whilst the little States send their best men opens up a possibility of crises in which representatives of compara-

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

tively insignificant Baltic or Balkan or South American republics may dominate the British Empire delegates. The League not psychologically homogeneous. Lord Lytton's intervention on behalf of India calls attention to this rift in the lute. The holding-aloof of the United States of America from the League is due to the fact that they themselves are a League of Nations more homogeneous than the Geneva League. Need for the secretary of the League to assume a right to call to account statesmen who make bellicose speeches in which they ignore their obligations under the Covenant PAGE 400

CHAPTER I

BEFORE THE WAR

IN compiling this record of what I did with my pen in the Great War, as we called it, I have purposely made no attempt to trim it into an academic history or to brush the dust off my own clothes or anyone else's before coming up for judgment now that the shouting is over, and nothing is still in action except the plundering and ransoming by which the victors are pauperizing themselves. I have already, in the preface to Heartbreak House, given a considered general account of the effect of the war on our behavior at home. What I offer here is a collection of the documents for which I was responsible in their original casualness, as possibly instructive examples of what goes on behind the battle front during a modern war.

To appreciate the moral shock they produced it must be borne in mind that our morality is never a simple, single, perfectly homogeneous body of thought and sympathy, as we conventionally assume it to be. Like white light it may present that appearance at quiet times; but the prism of war splits it violently into a spectrum in which all the colors of the rainbow are contrasted. I had to deal with several moralities, writing in terms sometimes of one, sometimes of another, and thus shocking some moral section at every stroke of my pen. For I entirely refused Romain Rolland's invitation to *planer au dessus de la mêlée* and survey the war from the empyrean of a morality which none of the combatants could possibly practise even if, like myself, they recognized that morality as their natural own, and regarded war with implacable horror and disgust. In all emergencies the neighborly man must be before all things helpful; and to be in the thick of the mess and yet behave as if one were safe in a philosophic heaven out of range of the aircraft guns seemed to me not only sublimely selfish (which is not fundamentally an objection to it when its exponents are persons of genuinely exalted character) but liable at any moment to be reduced to absurdity by the crashing of a bomb

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

through one's study roof. So I kept on the ground and appealed to every morality in turn to carry my points. I did not want Hohenzollernism to win because it was evident that in spite of its monarchical idealism it could not control Militarism and was in effect controlled by it. The morality of feudal robber barons and gentleman-conquerors cannot impose on me, in spite of its romantic disguises and its chivalrous heroes and ladylike heroines. However much our youthful sympathies may be with the medieval knight-errant monarchs, the duellists whom Richelieu exterminated, the chieftains slaughtered at Culloden, the highwaymen hanged by Charles II in spite of the tears of the court ladies, and all the other representatives of picturesque gallantry, I know that co-operative civilization, both in its early live-and-let-live stage and in its future Communist stage when security for anybody will be attainable only through security for everybody, must ruthlessly destroy all moralities, however exciting and romantically attractive, and however graced by chivalrous rules of the game and high discipline, which are at bottom moralities of murder and theft. Capitalist morality, being a civilian and middle class morality, leaves out both the frank direct bloodshedding and the courtly graces of the gentleman-conquerors; but the theft remains: the incentive of the capitalist is the political conquest and plunder of the proletariat. At least, that is my view, which I obtrude on you here only as a necessary clue to the understanding of my attitude and literary activities before, during, and after the war. I have no ethical respect for modern Capitalist society, and therefore contemplated the British, German, and French sections of it with impartial disapproval. I felt as if I were witnessing an engagement between two pirate fleets, with, however, the very important qualification that as I and my family and friends were on board British ships I did not intend the British section to be defeated if I could help it. All the ensigns were Jolly Rogers; but mine was clearly the one with the Union Jack in the corner.

My difficulty was, of course, that conquistadoresque foreign policy, *alias* Balance of Power Diplomacy, was not peculiar to

BEFORE THE WAR

Berlin under the Hohenzollerns. For London, Paris, and Petersburgh to reproach Potsdam and Vienna for it would have been a more impudent case of the pot calling the kettle black than I could possibly have countenanced without losing all credit outside our own suburbs. I knew that all the parties were up to the neck in Balance of Power diplomacy as laid down in Machiavelli's famous treatise. Bismarck's old balance was Teuton and Slav against Latin and English: that is, Germany, Austria, and Russia, with Italy as a sort of paid accomplice if possible, against France and England. The Kaiser had sacked Bismarck; thrown over Russia; and courted alliance with Islam, which meant Turkey. It was a fatal move, of which England and France took advantage by making an alliance with Russia, and thus producing the famous *Einkreisung* or Encirclement which made the Kaiser's defeat in 1918 inevitable. Move and countermove were alike revoltingly unscrupulous ethically; for both Russia and Turkey were obsolete and abominable despotisms with which no western State could decently associate. We had up to that time been ashamed of bolstering up Turkey (the Sick Man) even against our old enemy Russia, whose fugitive revolutionaries we had openly harbored, and whose Nihilist assassins of Tsars and Grand Dukes we had applauded as champions of liberty. All civilization called out for a combination of the leading western Powers against the old Russia and the old Turkey (now happily buried under the *débris* of their own internal explosions); yet in the face of that righteous clamor France and England conspired with the Tsardom to destroy Germany, and Germany conspired with the putrid remains of the Ottoman Empire to destroy France and England. In the eyes of a generation educated by Lord Roberts and Mr Rudyard Kipling to dread the Russian bear more than any other beast or bird in the heraldic menagerie the Russian alliance was hateful and cynical. To Germans educated by Bismarck the Turkish alliance was ridiculous, and the antagonizing of Russia dangerous.

This element of unpopularity on both sides in the new situation created by the Kaiser greatly increased the need for secrecy in

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

our diplomacy, and consequently for hypocrisy and mendacity in parliament when the new alliances could no longer be completely concealed. Luckily for the diplomatists the concealment was helped automatically by the conflict between Capitalism and Proletarianism in the internal politics of all the countries concerned. The Socialists and Trade Unionists who constituted the Proletarian movement were romantic novices in foreign policy, having always been too much preoccupied with industrial affairs at home to attend to it. They knew nothing of what was going on. It was one of their pet commonplaces that wars are caused by the Capitalist struggle for markets; and that, pending the abolition of the Capitalist system, the remedy (an impossible one) for war is a general strike. In the Liberal middle class echoes still lingered of the old comfortable assurances that diplomatic balancing of power is obsolete, and war between the great Powers of the west "unthinkable." I was not imposed on by either; but I also had been too preoccupied with my colleagues of the Fabian Society in working out the practicalities of English Socialism, and establishing a parliamentary Labor Party, to busy myself with foreign policy.

What woke me up was the effort of Count Harry Kessler to affirm an *entente cordiale* between England and Germany lest it should appear that the *entente* cultivated with France by Edward VII had exhausted England's stock of cordiality. Count Kessler proposed reciprocal manifestoes of friendship between London and Berlin; and I was asked to draft the London manifesto. Now nothing was easier than to draw up a string of eloquent references to the cultural bonds between Britain and Germany, to our common responsibility for the pioneering of modern civilization, to Shakespear and Goethe, Newton and Leibniz, London's love of Wagner's music and the like, on the lines of a Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs proposing the health of a distinguished German visitor at a civic banquet. But there was nothing in all this to prevent our signing it and going to war next day. Kessler was acting in good faith; and I felt that I could not be a party to humbugging him. I therefore introduced into my draft a test

BEFORE THE WAR

sentence which really meant something. It was to the effect that England, far from being jealous of the possession of a fleet by Germany, could regard it only as an additional guarantee of civilization.

I was taken aback by the completeness of the result of my test. I had expected that our thoroughgoing conquistadores would demur. But everybody demurred. Nobody would sign the manifesto with that sentence in it. Everybody would sign without it. The sentence was dropped; and everybody did sign—except myself. My refusal was not only a natural abstention from an act of public hypocrisy, but an underscoring of the warning to Kessler.

I was now fully aroused to the danger of our claim to rule the waves. The British doctrine of Command of the Seas is one with which I have no patience. It is morally monstrous and practically childish. I grant that until the seas, on which every nation, and indeed every individual, has a natural right of way, are efficiently policed by an authority representing all the nations, voyagers must carry arms or have armed escorts, were it only to protect themselves against pirates; but a claim on the part of any one Power to dominate the naval armaments of all other nations and treat the oceans and the Mediterranean as its own peculiar territory, needs only to be stated to appear utterly outrageous to everyone except the claimants. Until we set up an effective super-national marine police we must all live dangerously in this as in so many other respects. If by the arrogance of our would-be gentleman-conquerors we provoke the other nations to starve us, why, we must starve, consoled by such *Schadenfreude* as we can extract from the certainty that our foreign customers will be ruined by our destitution. Our case, we argue, is peculiar. Our dominions are scattered over the earth; and we must keep our communications open. Pray where is the peculiarity nowadays? The partition of Africa between the Mediterranean Powers has given each of them the very same excuse for insisting on being cock of the walk. France, for instance, must clearly keep the way across the Mediterranean open for the fifteen million negroes

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

whom she can throw into the field in the next war; and Italy can hardly be expected to refrain from reminding her neighbor that there are others in the same predicament. If Italy and France can afford to leave the two latchkeys of the Mediterranean, Gibraltar and Suez, in London, England can afford to leave them in Geneva. The pretension to nationalize Suez, Gibraltar, and Panama is a pretension to nationalize the equator, which is silly.

It happens that as I pen these lines a loudspeaker in the corner of the room is bellowing forth the speeches at the opening of the London Conference on Naval Armament, politely called Disarmament. The King is succeeded by Mr Ramsay Macdonald, and he by M. Tardieu, followed by echoes from the British Dominions (severely timelimited) and paraphrases *ad libitum* from the foreign Powers. Canada is verging on sycophancy; Ireland is reserved and brief (she has evidently to be content with three minutes); and Italy is masterful and pontifical. The occasion is one for more or less graceful phrasemaking only: that is, for what, were the speakers less exalted, might be called window dressing or even twaddle. Not a word is being said about command of the sea; only the King, after his evocation of an agreement between maritime nations to reduce their armaments, adds the saving phrase "to a point consistent with national security." As this point can be reached only when the nation making that reservation has sunk all the other nations' fleets and is competent to exterminate all their inhabitants at a moment's notice, the members of the Conference must have to exercise considerable self-control to refrain from winking at one another. Tomorrow, behind the scenes, will begin the real business of the conference, which is to settle whether the American and British fleets, when they fight for Command of the Seas, which they will both call Freedom of the Seas, will fire at twenty miles range or at fifteen, and whether their shells will be shot from 12-inch or 16-inch guns. And if the lower figures are agreed to, the Conference will break up waving them as olive branches to persuade us that their deliberations have made war an evil dream of the past.

BEFORE THE WAR

When Harry Kessler tried to make his countrymen and ours shake hands, the United States had not yet been unintentionally provoked by the eloquence of Mr Lloyd George to resolve that it would tolerate no naval superiority on our part or anyone else's, and to set about building a fleet big enough to blow ours out of the water. It was England who, as the fate of my test sentence suggested, had resolved, consciously in the case of Admiral Fisher and his supporters, but subconsciously for the most part, that the German fleet must be sent to the bottom at all ethical costs. On that point we were, it seemed, all conquistadores. I could understand this as I can understand all the other common follies of mankind; but I could not share the illusion that sinking the German fleet would settle the question, or leave us in a condition of greater security. Obviously, as the event has proved, it must leave us in a condition of greater peril.

I therefore set my wits to work on the diplomatic situation. I had to tackle it singlehanded and dictatorially, as it was useless at that time to attempt to interest my Socialist and Labor colleagues in diplomacy. Even if I could have roused them to the urgency of the situation they were too deeply committed to disarmament and Pacifism to support a proposal which involved additional armament for threatening war on war. I remained in this position all through, having to do without the invaluable counsel and criticism which has always been at my disposal in forming my views on social and industrial questions at home. Imperialist diplomacy is a sort of pitch which only Imperialists can be persuaded to touch. And its emergencies leave no time for the years of research, study, and consultation which are needed for faultless conclusions, or for the conferences and compromises which produce documents with more than one signature. My war pronouncements had to be home-made one-man affairs, in which inferences often had to serve when I should have preferred evidence, and, later on, with events moving with such velocity that no pen could keep pace with them. I began with the following newspaper articles.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

ARMAMENTS AND CONSCRIPTION A TRIPLE ALLIANCE AGAINST WAR

(From The Daily Chronicle of the 18th March 1913)

The great secret of our foreign policy is that we have no foreign policy. From time to time the Secretary for Foreign Affairs announces to the House of Commons that we are trapped in some alliance which we had not the faintest intention of making. We ask why we were not told before. The plain reason: namely, that the Secretary did not know it before, and went into the business without seeing what it meant because the Japanese marquis (or whoever it was) was a very gentlemanly man and seemed to know all about it, is unpresentable; so the Secretary falls back on the convention that foreign policy is not a safe subject for public discussion, because the least indiscretion might precipitate the always imminent catastrophe of a European war. As no member of the House of Commons can rise and call the transaction in question without betraying the fact that he is, if possible, more densely fogged than the right honorable gentleman who is laboriously trying to invent some plausible excuse for our predicament, and who does at least know the names of several European Foreign Ministers and a little elementary geography into the bargain, not a word is said. Thus speeches on foreign affairs are listened to with the respectful attention which in England is the infallible diagnostic of private bewilderment and guiltily conscious ignorance.

Foreign Office chiefs are always spoken of with respect from both sides of the House. Compare the utterances of the Press and platform on the personal characters and public views of Mr Bonar Law and Lord Lansdowne, Mr Lloyd George and Sir Edward Grey, and you see at once that the two home politicians represent intelligible opinions and intelligible policies, whereas in the case of the two diplomats, nobody, least of all the noble lord and the right honorable gentleman themselves, have the remotest idea of what is going to come of the things they have been hustled into

signing or doing, or why they were signed or done. We learn with alarm what the other Powers want, and are told that we must adapt ourselves as best we can to their volition. But as to wanting anything ourselves or having any ideas of our own——!

The consequences are as grotesque as might be expected. We are supposed to be the corner stone of the highest civilization in the world: the Protestant and Voltairean civilization of Western Europe. Our only allies in that civilization are our nearest neighbors, France and Germany. Yet when a half-Oriental Power (Russia) went to war with an ultra-Oriental Power (Japan), we found to our astonishment that we were committed, Heaven knows how or why, to a solemn engagement to throw ourselves into the conflict on the side of Japan if anyone went in on the side of Russia. Having by this step given the Russians an excellent reason for regarding us as their wanton enemy, we next found ourselves thrown with a violent bounce into Russia's arms on a general understanding that England's mission in life is to destroy Germany and Germany's to destroy England, and that we must therefore devote ourselves to the support of the most formidable of the Oriental empires because it is a standing menace to the chief stronghold of Western European culture. In the ecstasies of this embrace we achieved a new document: the Anglo-Russian agreement. As far as I can ascertain, I am the only English-speaking person, alive or dead, not being a compositor or proof reader, who has ever read this agreement. Nothing that Sir Edward Grey has ever said shews the smallest knowledge of its contents. It was in effect a commercial partition of Persia. Russia was to have a free hand between such and such agreed points on the frontier: England was to have the like between such and such others; and each was to keep off the other's grass. Simple enough, one would think; and yet nobody seemed to understand it. It was talked of, and Sir Edward was applauded for it, as if it were a master-stroke of *Weltpolitik*, involving the fate of the whole world in a scheme of such magnitude and complication that no common mind could grasp it.

Then everything was upset by somebody doing something.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

ARMAMENTS AND CONSCRIPTION A TRIPLE ALLIANCE AGAINST WAR

(From The Daily Chronicle of the 18th March 1913)

The great secret of our foreign policy is that we have no foreign policy. From time to time the Secretary for Foreign Affairs announces to the House of Commons that we are trapped in some alliance which we had not the faintest intention of making. We ask why we were not told before. The plain reason: namely, that the Secretary did not know it before, and went into the business without seeing what it meant because the Japanese marquis (or whoever it was) was a very gentlemanly man and seemed to know all about it, is unpresentable; so the Secretary falls back on the convention that foreign policy is not a safe subject for public discussion, because the least indiscretion might precipitate the always imminent catastrophe of a European war. As no member of the House of Commons can rise and call the transaction in question without betraying the fact that he is, if possible, more densely fogged than the right honorable gentleman who is laboriously trying to invent some plausible excuse for our predicament, and who does at least know the names of several European Foreign Ministers and a little elementary geography into the bargain, not a word is said. Thus speeches on foreign affairs are listened to with the respectful attention which in England is the infallible diagnostic of private bewilderment and guiltily conscious ignorance.

Foreign Office chiefs are always spoken of with respect from both sides of the House. Compare the utterances of the Press and platform on the personal characters and public views of Mr Bonar Law and Lord Lansdowne, Mr Lloyd George and Sir Edward Grey, and you see at once that the two home politicians represent intelligible opinions and intelligible policies, whereas in the case of the two diplomats, nobody, least of all the noble lord and the right honorable gentleman themselves, have the remotest idea of what is going to come of the things they have been hustled into

BEFORE THE WAR

signing or doing, or why they were signed or done. We learn with alarm what the other Powers want, and are told that we must adapt ourselves as best we can to their volition. But as to wanting anything ourselves or having any ideas of our own——!

The consequences are as grotesque as might be expected. We are supposed to be the corner stone of the highest civilization in the world: the Protestant and Voltairean civilization of Western Europe. Our only allies in that civilization are our nearest neighbors, France and Germany. Yet when a half-Oriental Power (Russia) went to war with an ultra-Oriental Power (Japan), we found to our astonishment that we were committed, Heaven knows how or why, to a solemn engagement to throw ourselves into the conflict on the side of Japan if anyone went in on the side of Russia. Having by this step given the Russians an excellent reason for regarding us as their wanton enemy, we next found ourselves thrown with a violent bounce into Russia's arms on a general understanding that England's mission in life is to destroy Germany and Germany's to destroy England, and that we must therefore devote ourselves to the support of the most formidable of the Oriental empires because it is a standing menace to the chief stronghold of Western European culture. In the ecstasies of this embrace we achieved a new document: the Anglo-Russian agreement. As far as I can ascertain, I am the only English-speaking person, alive or dead, not being a compositor or proof reader, who has ever read this agreement. Nothing that Sir Edward Grey has ever said shews the smallest knowledge of its contents. It was in effect a commercial partition of Persia. Russia was to have a free hand between such and such agreed points on the frontier: England was to have the like between such and such others; and each was to keep off the other's grass. Simple enough, one would think; and yet nobody seemed to understand it. It was talked of, and Sir Edward was applauded for it, as if it were a master-stroke of *Weltpolitik*, involving the fate of the whole world in a scheme of such magnitude and complication that no common mind could grasp it.

Then everything was upset by somebody doing something.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Italy did something, in Tripoli. France did something, in Morocco. Spain did something in the same region. Germany sent a warship to Agadir to intimate that she, too, would do something if she were not consulted. Montenegro did something with a vengeance. Greece, Servia, and Bulgaria joined in; and the map of South-Eastern Europe went into the rag mill. Austria and Russia found that the Servian and Bulgarian troops with which they had fought their old battles were now fighting shoulder to shoulder on their own account. And we, who had not been consulted in these matters at all, stood by twittering. We are still twittering. Certainly, we twitter very hard and very earnestly. Sir Andrew Aguecheek may be excused for being a little nervous in the part of Bismarck, Cavour, and Carnot all rolled into one: still, we carry it off well enough to convince the credulous that we know what we are twittering about. But when all is said, twittering is not foreign policy.

Be it noted in passing, as an example of how little our people care about the Foreign Office, that when the Tsar hastened to our shores to fall on Sir Edward Grey's neck (the least he could do under the circumstances) Mr Asquith, to save the monarch from being mobbed, did not allow him to land. Meanwhile a quite genuine *entente* with France had been achieved through the late King Edward's liking for Biarritz, which exactly reflected his people's liking for Boulogne. But fine words butter no parsnips; and all these *ententes* offer us not the smallest guarantee that there is not at the Foreign Office some signed alliance with the bitterest enemies of the very neighbors on whom we are showering our cordialities.

What our policy ought to be, and would be if we were capable of a policy, is obvious enough. To us war is an unqualified nuisance. We have no conquests to make in Europe; and elsewhere we have bitten off so much more than we can chew that the problem for us is rather one of unloading by more home rule and less dry nursing. Above all, a war between France and Germany would be pure mischief for us. And beyond this immediate consideration there is the necessity for "Good Europeans" to stand together

BEFORE THE WAR

against the time when we begin to realize that we have not yet invented a weapon that cannot be used as effectively by black and yellow troops as by white ones; for our methods of warfare are still as childish as our methods of agriculture.

Our first step, therefore, should be to propose to France and Germany a triple alliance, the terms being that if France attack Germany we combine with Germany to crush France, and if Germany attack France, we combine with France to crush Germany. Germany doubts whether France would come into this alliance in her present temper; but I really do not see how she could help it if Germany consented, because we should conclude a dual alliance if we could not have a triple one, in which case France would be in the position that whereas she could not attack Germany without fighting us at the same time, Germany could attack her without our interference. The alliance should guarantee, further, that if any other Power were to attack either France or Germany, the three would line up together against that Power. From that starting-point we might enlarge the combination by accessions from Holland and the Scandinavian kingdoms, and finally achieve the next step in civilization, the policing of Europe against war and the barbarians.

We alone can take the first step; for we alone need ask nothing for ourselves. We need not and should not ask for any reciprocal engagement. As to our own defence, we must say (or mean without saying) politely and modestly to all the powers of the earth, "We are quite aware that from the moment when we are not prepared to fight the lot of you, we cease to exist as a Power, and must depend, like Holland and Belgium, on the tolerance or the jealousies of the other Powers. We know that the alliance means that if we attack either France or Germany we shall have to fight both. But as we have not the smallest intention of attacking either, and as we are just as much exposed to a combination of the two against us without the alliance as with it, we will take our chance."

But how, it will be said, are we to promise to take an effective part in a war on the Continent if we have not a powerful expeditionary force? Well, we must have an expeditionary force. After

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

all, the British army never does fight at home; and we can send our troops across the Channel or North Sea just as we sent them to South Africa. If we cannot have an effective army for all purposes we may as well shut up shop as far as foreign policy is concerned until we make an end of war; and that we can only do by being prepared to make war on war.

Humiliating as it is, I suppose I must say something about the cost. The difficulty on that score is imaginary. We wickedly waste every year more money than the wildest militarist asks. We grudge the captain of a battleship an income of three figures; and we helplessly throw incomes of five and six figures into the laps of babies and into the pockets of persons who frankly describe each other as rotters. The real cost of war is the withdrawal of men from less mischievous industries; but as we so waste and degrade human life today that our residuum of unemployables runs into millions, the less we say about the horrors of making a man a soldier the better. Our industrial system, or rather chaos, murders more souls in a year than any military system murders bodies. We have men enough and money enough for all military purposes. The real objection to military service is that we are all afraid of being wounded or killed in the field; and that is a sound fundamental reason for making an end of war, not for shirking the risk and thereby perpetuating it. All armies consist mostly of cowards. That, curiously enough, is what makes war so thrilling. It is no more possible to take cowardice into account in the matter of an army than to take sea sickness into account in the matter of the Navy.

As a Socialist I am very strongly in favor of compulsory service. All income tax returns and insurance cards should in future have a column for chest measurement and age; and all able-bodied persons should be obliged to give the country 35 years' service, of which a few could be devoted to military training. Our habit of exempting people from their duties on the ground of their having what they call an independent income, meaning an income independent of any virtue or usefulness on their part, will stand revealed in its utter silliness when the service in which every man

BEFORE THE WAR

is expected to do his duty is combined with the service in which every man is allowed to be a shirker if he can shirk without starving, and a mercenary if he cant. If we must begin with military service because we have let the other service slip out of our control, at least it will be a beginning. I do not believe it would be in the least unpopular if only it were taken out of the hands of the upper soldiery. You cannot persuade these gentlemen that a soldier can be anything else but an outlaw; and you cannot persuade the man in the street that he should have a flogging and two years hard labor as a soldier for an offence which he can commit as a cabman for a trifling fine or even a dismissal of his case by the magistrate on the ground that it served the plaintiff right.

Allow a private to black Lord Roberts's eye (in the wildly improbable event of his wanting to do it) on exactly the same terms as Lord Roberts's footman may black it, and the resistance to military service will vanish like summer steam. If any gentleman cannot command on these terms let him step down and be commanded, or perhaps boarded out as feeble-minded under the new Act.

If only an inoculation of commonsense could be substituted for vaccination, with just enough uncommonsense to feel that a man with a little pride and a little pluck may make as good a soldier as a hopelessly intimidated spaniel, we should see our way through a surprising number of our panic-begotten difficulties.

Nine months later I tried again.

THE PEACE OF EUROPE AND HOW TO ATTAIN IT

(*From The Daily News of the 1st January 1914*)

Anatole France, during his recent visit to us, took more than one opportunity to insist that it is the duty of England, France, and Germany to guarantee the peace of Europe. Now, considering that the foreign policy of these three States consists mostly in threatening the said peace, it is not surprising that our papers and

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

politicians doubted whether they could have understood our visitor's French correctly, and discreetly allowed the subject to drop. And yet it is in this obvious and easy combination, and not in that impotent and paralytic absurdity called the Concert of Europe, that our salvation from war lies.

What is more, no other foreign policy except a frankly belligerent policy of war and conquest is possible for these countries today. And the difficulty of inducing them to enter on it is not that they have alternative policies, but that they have no foreign policies at all. Being in that deplorable condition, our foreign Ministers stare about them apprehensively, and make speeches—quite intelligent speeches sometimes—about the perils of the situation. Apprehensiveness soon intensifies into plain funk. Then we have navy scares, and army scares, and invasion scares, and Channel Tunnel scares, and aviation scares, and finally scare positive, pure and simple, scare for its own sake. Now it is difficult to make speeches about this sort of scare. A Minister can say at great length that he is afraid of Germany or of an invasion, or of having too few men or too few ships; but to say simply that he is afraid, and to be unable to answer the simple question "What of?" is awkward, and is, in fact, not done.

Therefore funk produces a new sort of speech in which something that sounds like a deep and complicated policy is expounded. It is explained, with impressive knowledge of foreign affairs, that as Russia is doing this, and Germany might do that, and France once did the other, and as these considerations oblige Italy to do something which will leave Austria no alternative but to do something else which will place Turkey in a position which will force her to take steps which will reopen the Eastern question, England will lose India and the command of the seas, and be reduced to the level of a sixth-rate Power, if she does not at once do something else, which is usually to build twenty more Dreadnoughts and then not know what to do with them.

Please remark that this masterly analysis of the state of Europe resolves itself into the fact that Russia wants something, and is stretching out her hand to take it. Beautifully as the apple-cart is

BEFORE THE WAR

balanced, all that is needed to upset it is that some other State should stop twittering with terror at the rest, and, like Russia, want something and do something. A verb is a word which signifies to be, to do, or to suffer. To have a real foreign policy involves being and doing. To have none involves suffering; and that is exactly what we are generally doing. We provide our foreign minister with an enormously expensive sword in order that he may be in a position to step into the European arena and urge England's needs and claims, backed by the means of compelling attention to them. And lo! he has no needs and no claims, and stumbles about tripping over his own scabbard when he is not tripping over somebody else's.

That is the impression produced by our diplomacy today. And when we claim that foreign policy should be controlled by the democracy instead of by aristocratic foreign secretaries and their retinues of Nuts, nothing comes of it, because the democracy knows well that it is as destitute of a policy as any Foreign Office in the world. Complaints of expenditure on the navy, tags from Tennyson, and Christmas-card Pacifism do not make a policy, and will not prevent the building of a single Dreadnought nor avert conscription, which is coming not because anyone outside the military profession wants it, but because Nature abhors a vacuum, and impatiently orders that people who won't think had better be shot.

As for me, I cannot see any difficulty in the matter any more than Anatole France does. I want international peace. I have no objection to the modern nostrum of hygienic war. I appreciate the saying of Nietzsche that a good war justifies any cause. I am pleased with the spirit of those who are now advocating war for its own sake, as a tonic. But it is clear that war of this kind must be commercially and politically disinterested, and must not be forced upon foreigners nor made an obstacle to the business of the world. Let those who believe in it repair to Salisbury Plain and blaze away at one another until the survivors (if any) feel that their characters are up to the mark. They can then return to civil life purified by artillery fire and display those qualities which have

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

made the title of Old Soldier so expressive that Dickens applied it even to a particular sort of woman. I am old enough to remember the introduction of short service into our army, and how all the most experienced commanders of the day testified that a little military service went an extremely long way in its effect on character; and I notice that the unabated complaints by the military authorities of the difficulty of inducing people to employ discharged warriors still suggest that they are almost too good for human nature's daily food. However, as I say, by all means let us cultivate character with cordite if we are convinced of the effectiveness of that treatment. Thanks to my age, I am in the second or third fighting line; and my character is past praying for; so militarism does not affect me personally.

But international war is clearly an unmitigated nuisance. Have as much character-building civil war as you like on Salisbury Plain or in the Solent or even in Ulster; but there must be no sowing of dragons' teeth like the Franco-Prussian War. Any intelligent Foreign Minister would find his foreign policy in putting a stop to such crimes. And, as it happens, England can do it single-handed quite easily if she can keep her knees from knocking together in the present militarist fashion.

How? you ask.

Very simply.

By politely announcing that a war between France and Germany would be so inconvenient to England that England is prepared to pledge herself to defend either country if it be attacked by the other. If we are asked how we are to decide which is the real aggressor, we can reply that we shall take our choice, or even, when the problem is insoluble, toss up for it, but that we shall take a hand anyhow, and therefore there had better be no obscurity about the matter. If we are asked what we shall do if France and Germany punish our presumption by uniting to make war on us for the withdrawal of our ultimatum, we can reply that we have no security against their doing so now at any moment, and that we are and always have been quite aware that, as an unpopular and ill-mannered nation, our existence depends

BEFORE THE WAR

on our being prepared to fight the entire foreign human race if need be. One must be ready with answers to the questions which foolish people ask; and if the answer is according to their folly, so much the better.

Like all sensible proposals this would be received at first blush as revolting and impracticable. But the British offer would stand as a constant temptation before the two great Occidental Powers; for if one accepted it the other would be in the dangerous position of having to fight the other unsupported if attacked, whilst the other under the same circumstances would fight at an advantage of two to one. Consequently, if one of the two Powers accepted the alliance for the sake of security, the other would be forced to come in also, or else to seek some countervailing alliance, which would not be easy to find at short notice. If both Powers refused to entertain the notion on any terms, we might intimate that it still appealed to us, and that both of them might depend on our putting it into practice with or without their approval. Such an assurance would be at least a strong incentive to peace; for it is really not necessary, when interfering in a fight, to obtain the consent of the party whose side you take. In a naval engagement, for instance, between A and B, England can clearly steam in and begin to sink B's ships if she chooses and can. The admiral of the A fleet can no doubt signal "I vehemently protest against your unwarranted interference"; but he cannot refloat the sunken ships nor repudiate his assisted victory. Take it how you will, England, or any one of the three Powers taking the line I propose for England, would be in a strong position.

Can anybody suggest an alternative policy?

Take the case of Russia and Sweden. Sweden, the Ulster of Europe, believes, rightly or wrongly, that Russia has designs on her territory north of the Baltic. In a reasonable state of affairs the whole north-west of Europe should guarantee Sweden against such an aggression. At present she has no guarantee at all. But if such an understanding as I have suggested between Germany, France, and England were in existence, Sweden could join it and

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

sleep in peace. Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, and Switzerland would obviously stand to gain by coming in, as they have practically no powers of aggression, and inadequate powers of defence; and with that as a beginning, a glance at the map of Europe will convince anyone that at last Western civilization—or, as Sir Edward Carson would put it, the Protestant North—would be safe. Better that, I think, than a Concert of Europe that can be kicked out of the way by a tiny State like Montenegro.

I invite the armament trades to note that this policy does not involve a reduction of armaments, though it would probably check the increase of expenditure which now threatens to provoke a reaction. I have nothing but contempt for the imbecility of the people who are willing to throw away hundreds of millions yearly on their idlers and wasters, and yet grudge a negligible fraction of that sum for a battleship—who stare idly at the sale of a pound of London's flesh for three millions by a nobleman to a speculator, and yet feel deeply humiliated by the result of the Carpentier-Wells glove fight. By all means let us have bigger armaments than ever; but let us get value for our money in strength and influence, instead of casting every new cannon in an ecstasy of terror and then being afraid to aim it at anybody. I have no taste for the military spirit that whines continuously for an impossible security, and thrills Europe by cutting open the head of a boy pastrycook held securely by a squad of soldiers. I like courage (like most constitutionally timid civilians) and the active use of strength for the salvation of the world. I think it is good to have a giant's strength, and not at all tyrannous to use it like a giant, provided you are a decent sort of giant. What on earth is strength for but to be used? And will any reasonable man tell me that we are using our strength now to any purpose?

The policy proposed in these two articles was accepted twelve years later at Locarno, when it was unanimously applauded as a triumph of British statesmanship. As the war had then taken

BEFORE THE WAR

place, and the policy was so completely out of date that it could do neither good nor harm, everyone felt quite happy about it. But when I proposed it at just the right moment it produced practically no effect. The conquistadores were so bent on their war with Germany that their instinctive dread was that the allusion to its possibility might give the alarm and prevent it, which was exactly what I was aiming at. They therefore took care to persuade themselves and others that war must not be mentioned because an indiscreet word might fire the magazine. One distinguished diplomatist went so far as to say (or so it was reported to me) that if I were at the Foreign Office there would be a European war within a fortnight. If he really said so, it was the sole notice taken of my appeal.

It is clear enough now that if the war could have been prevented at all, the action I suggested on our part could alone have prevented it; but as it is also clear that the war, by destroying four empires and establishing Communism in Russia, has so completely defeated the aims of the conquistadores that they would be very glad to restore the *status quo ante* with abject apologies if that were possible, whilst the political changes which their proletarian opponents could hardly have expected to see achieved in less than a century have been swept through in four years, I can hardly claim to have shewn much foresight in simply attempting to prevent a war between England and Germany. The proof is that I would not, like the conquistadores, undo the war if I could. The changes I desired have been made in the most horrible way; but if men, being badly brought up and politically uneducated, cannot or will not make such changes in any other way, one can only feel thankful that they have been made at all, and that some survivors are left to profit by it, with plenty of post-war children whose hands are clean.

My position with my German friends after the Kessler episode was delicate. I did not know everything that transpired later; but I guessed enough to feel that we were already to all intents at war with Germany, and that in giving information or warning to any German I must consider myself as giving it to the enemy.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Even if I had been able to prove my facts I could not have told Lichnowsky, the German ambassador, that we were cramming our fleet with ammunition for five years fighting (the ammunition was obsolete, but not so meant); that our commanding officers were under instructions to study the ground in Flanders on which they were presently to fight; that Belgium had been intimidated and enlisted on our side, and France and Russia squared; and that the sooner every German in England, including the ambassador, got naturalized as an Englishman or returned to his country or made for America, the better for him. Lichnowsky's reply, if equally candid, would have been that Germany too had its conquistadores and alarmists and preparations, and that sensible people did not worry about such things. So I could only ask him one day when lunching with him what he thought of my published proposal. He evidently did not consider that sort of thing my business, and dismissed it by telling me emphatically that Sir Edward Grey, our Foreign Secretary, was the best friend Germany had in the world, and that he would not be a party to any action that implied the slightest mistrust of him. I was too polite to exclaim *Sancta simplicitas!* And I could not contradict him, because Lord Grey was and is the best friend everybody except perhaps Mr Lloyd George has in the world, and can go through the most sanguinary war as a principal agent without noticing anything worse than a deplorable *contretemps*.

There was nothing more to be said. My wife had done her best in vain to shake the belief of her hostess that the danger of revolt in Ireland made it impossible for England to go to war. After all, as Kessler knew what had happened about my test sentence, the position was as much before Lichnowsky as before me. When he at last realized the situation it was too late: the war was upon him. The Germans dashed straight into the ambush by invading Belgium; and this put our entry into the long plotted war in perfect diplomatic order. Knowing little about war, and less about diplomacy, we all went crazy. Editions of the daily papers were rushed out every hour and bought up feverishly. They were written mostly by astonished and excited journalists who,

BEFORE THE WAR

like their readers, knew nothing of what had been going on under their noses for ten years. Their vision had no historic perspective; and their notions of warfare had been picked up at the cinema. It is impossible to describe the public feeling. It was perfectly natural and perfectly absurd, except among the conquistadores, who were given a free hand and supreme powers. The corresponding lunacy in Germany has been shewn to us by Maximilian Harden with a bitterer pen than mine. In both countries romantic exaltation reached the heavens; and deluded ignorance plumbed the bottomless pit.

As for me, knowing enough to be greatly oppressed by my own ignorance, I collected all the documents I could get, and retired to Torquay, where I sunned myself on the roof of the Hydro Hotel for nearly two months, at the end of which I had produced my *Common Sense About the War*, which I here reprint without alteration. It appeared as a supplement to *The New Statesman* on the 14th November 1914.

CHAPTER II

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

“Let a European War break out—the war, perhaps, between the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente, which so many journalists and politicians in England and Germany contemplate with criminal levity. If the combatants prove to be equally balanced, it may, after the first battles, smoulder on for thirty years. What will be the population of London, or Manchester, or Chemnitz, or Bremen, or Milan, at the end of it?” (The Great Society, by Graham Wallas. June 1914.)

THE time has now come to pluck up courage and begin to talk and write soberly about the war. At first the mere horror of it stunned the more thoughtful of us; and even now only those who are not in actual contact with or bereaved relation to its heartbreaking wreckage can think sanely about it, or endure to hear others discuss it coolly. As to the thoughtless, well, not for a moment dare I suggest that for the first few weeks they were all scared out of their wits; for I know too well that the British civilian does not allow his perfect courage to be questioned: only experienced soldiers and foreigners are allowed the infirmity of fear. But they certainly were—shall I say a little upset? They felt in that solemn hour that England was lost if only one single traitor in their midst let slip the truth about anything in the universe. It was a perilous time for me. I do not hold my tongue easily; and my inborn dramatic faculty and professional habit as a playwright prevent me from taking a one-sided view even when the most probable result of taking a many-sided one is prompt lynching. Besides, until Home Rule emerges from its present suspended animation, I shall retain my Irish capacity for criticizing England with something of the detachment of a foreigner, and perhaps with a certain slightly malicious taste for taking the conceit out of her. Lord Kitchener made a mistake the other day in rebuking the Irish volunteers for not rallying faster to the defence of “their country.” They do not regard it as

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

their country yet. He should have asked them to come forward as usual and help poor old England through a stiff fight. Then it would have been all right.

Having thus frankly confessed my bias, which you can allow for as a rifleman allows for the wind, I give my views for what they are worth. They will be of some use; because, however blinded I may be by prejudice or perversity, my prejudices in this matter are not those which blind the British patriot, and therefore I am fairly sure to see some things that have not yet struck him.

And first, I do not see this war as one which has welded Governments and peoples into complete and sympathetic solidarity as against the common enemy. I see the people of England united in a fierce detestation and definace of the views and acts of Prussian Junkerism. And I see the German people stirred to the depths by a similar antipathy to English Junkerism, and angered by the apparent treachery and duplicity of the attack made on them by us in their extremest peril from France and Russia. I see both nations duped, but alas! not quite unwillingly duped, by their Junkers and Militarists into wreaking on one another the wrath they should have spent in destroying Junkerism and Militarism in their own country. And I see the Junkers and Militarists of England and Germany jumping at the chance they have longed for in vain for many years of smashing one another and establishing their own oligarchy as the dominant military power in the world. No doubt the heroic remedy for this tragic misunderstanding is that both armies should shoot their officers and go home to gather in their harvests in the villages and make a revolution in the towns; and though this is not at present a practicable solution, it must be frankly mentioned, because it or something like it is always a possibility in a defeated conscript army if its commanders push it beyond human endurance when its eyes are opening to the fact that in murdering its neighbors it is biting off its nose to vex its face, besides riveting the intolerable yoke of Militarism and Junkerism more tightly than ever on its own neck. But there is no chance—or, as

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

our Junkers would put it, no danger—of our soldiers yielding to such an ecstasy of commonsense. They have enlisted voluntarily; they are not defeated nor likely to be; their communications are intact and their meals reasonably punctual; they are as pugnacious as their officers; and in fighting Prussia they are fighting a more deliberate, conscious, tyrannical, personally insolent, and dangerous Militarism than their own. Still, even for a voluntary professional army, that possibility exists, just as for the civilian there is a limit beyond which taxation, bankruptcy, privation, terror, and inconvenience cannot be pushed without revolution or a social dissolution more ruinous than submission to conquest. I mention all this, not to make myself wantonly disagreeable, but because military persons, thinking naturally that there is nothing like leather, are now talking of this war as likely to become a permanent institution like the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's, forgetting, I think, that the rate of consumption maintained by modern military operations is much greater relatively to the highest possible rate of production maintainable under the restrictions of war time than it has ever been before.

The European settlement at the end of the war will be effected, let us hope, not by a regimental mess of fire-eaters sitting round an up-ended drum in a vanquished Berlin or Vienna, but by some sort of Congress in which all the Powers (including, very importantly, the United States of America) will be represented. Now I foresee a certain danger of our being taken by surprise at that Congress, and making ourselves unnecessarily difficult and unreasonable, by presenting ourselves to it in the character of Injured Innocence. We shall not be accepted in that character. Such a Congress will most certainly regard us as being, next to the Prussians (if it makes even that exception), the most quarrelsome people in the universe. I am quite conscious of the surprise and scandal this anticipation may cause among my more highminded (*hochnäsig*, the Germans call it) readers. Let me therefore break it gently by expatiating for a while on the subject of Junkerism and Militarism generally, and on the history of

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

the literary propaganda of war between England and Potsdam which has been going on openly for the last forty years on both sides. I beg the patience of my readers during this painful operation. If it becomes unbearable, they can always put the paper down and relieve themselves by calling the Kaiser Attila and Mr Keir Hardie a traitor twenty times or so. Then they will feel, I hope, refreshed enough to resume. For, after all, abusing the Kaiser or Keir Hardie or me will not hurt the Germans, whereas a clearer view of the political situation will certainly help us. Besides, I do not believe that the trueborn Englishman in his secret soul relishes the pose of Injured Innocence any more than I do myself. He puts it on only because he is told that it is respectable.

What is a Junker? Is it a German officer of twenty-three, with offensive manners, and a habit of cutting down innocent civilians with his sabre? Sometimes; but not at all exclusively that or anything like that. Let us resort to the dictionary. I turn to the *Encyclopädisches Wörterbuch* of Muret Sanders. Excuse its quaint German-English.

Junker = Young nobleman, younker, lording, country squire, country gentleman, squirearchy. **Junkerherrschaft** = squirearchy, landocracy. **Junkerleben** = Life of a country gentleman, (*figuratively*) a jolly life. **Junkerpartei** = country party. **Junkerwirtschaft** = doings of the country party.

Thus we see that the Junker is by no means peculiar to Prussia. We may claim to produce the article in a perfection that may well make Germany despair of ever surpassing us in that line. Sir Edward Grey is a Junker from his topmost hair to the tips of his toes; and Sir Edward is a charming man, incapable of cutting down even an Opposition front bencher, or of telling a German he intends to have him shot. Lord Cromer is a Junker. Mr Winston Churchill is an odd and not disagreeable compound of Junker and Yankee: his frank anti-German pugnacity is enormously more popular than the moral babble (Milton's phrase) of his sanctimonious colleagues. He is a bumptious and jolly Junker, just as Lord Curzon is an uppish Junker. I need

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

not string out the list. In these islands the Junker is literally all over the shop.

It is very difficult for anyone who is not either a Junker or a successful barrister to get into an English Cabinet, no matter which party is in power, or to avoid resigning when we strike up the drum. The Foreign Office is a Junker Club. Our governing classes are overwhelmingly Junker; all who are not Junkers are riff-raff whose only claim to their position is the possession of ability of some sort: mostly ability to make money. And, of course, the Kaiser is a Junker, though less true-blue than the Crown Prince, and much less autocratic than Sir Edward Grey, who, without consulting us, sends us to war by a word to an ambassador and pledges all our wealth to his foreign allies by a stroke of his pen.

Now that we know what a Junker is, let us have a look at the Militarists. A Militarist is a person who believes that all real power is the power to kill, and that Providence is on the side of the big battalions. The most famous Militarist at present, thanks to the zeal with which we have bought and quoted his book, is General Friedrich Von Bernhardi. But we cannot allow the General to take precedence of our own writers as a Militarist propagandist. I am old enough to remember the beginning of the anti-German phase of that very ancient propaganda in England. The Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871 left Europe very much taken aback. Up to that date nobody was afraid of Prussia, though everybody was a little afraid of France; and we were keeping "buffer States" between ourselves and Russia in the east. Germany had indeed beaten Denmark; but then Denmark was a little State, and was abandoned in her hour of need by those who should have helped her, to the great indignation of Ibsen. Germany had also beaten Austria; but somehow everybody seems able to beat Austria, though nobody seems able to draw the moral that defeats do not matter as much as the Militarists think, Austria being as important as ever. Suddenly Germany beat France right down into the dust, by the exercise of an organized efficiency in war of which nobody up to then had any

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

conception. There was not a State in Europe that did not say to itself "Good Heavens! what would happen if she attacked *us*?" We in England thought of our old-fashioned army, and our old-fashioned commander George Ranger (of Cambridge), and our War Office with its Crimean tradition of imbecility; and we shook in our shoes. But we were not such fools as to leave it at that. We soon produced the first page of the Bernhardian literature: an anonymous booklet entitled *The Battle of Dorking*. It was not the first page of English Militarist literature: you have only to turn back to the burst of glorification of war which heralded the silly Crimean campaign (Tennyson's *Maud* is a surviving sample) to find pæans to Mars which would have made Treitschke blush (perhaps they did); but it was the first page in which it was assumed as a matter of course that Germany and not France nor Russia was England's natural enemy. The *Battle of Dorking* had an enormous sale; and the wildest guesses were current as to its authorship. And its moral was "To arms; or the Germans will besiege London as they besieged Paris." From that time until the present, the British propaganda of war with Germany has never ceased. The lead given by *The Battle of Dorking* was taken up by articles in the daily press and the magazines. Later on came the Jingo fever (anti-Russian, by the way; but let us not mention that just now), Stead's *Truth About the Navy*, Mr Spenser Wilkinson, the suppression of the Channel Tunnel, Mr Robert Blatchford, Mr Garvin, Admiral Maxse, Mr Newbolt, Mr Rudyard Kipling, *The National Review*, Lord Roberts, the Navy League, the imposition of an Imperialist Foreign Secretary on the Liberal Cabinet, Mr Wells's *War in the Air* (well worth re-reading just now), and the Dreadnoughts. Throughout all these agitations the enemy, the villain of the piece, the White Peril, was Prussia and her millions of German conscripts. At first, in *The Battle of Dorking* phase, the note was mainly defensive. But from the moment when the Kaiser began to copy our Armada policy by building a big fleet, the anti-German agitation became openly aggressive; and the cry that the German fleet or ours must sink, and that a war between England and Germany

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

was bound to come some day, speedily ceased to be merely a cry with our Militarists and became an axiom with them. And what our Militarists said our Junkers echoed and our Junker diplomats played for. The story of how they manoeuvred to hem Germany and Austria in with an Anglo-Franco-Russian combination will be found told with soldierly directness and with the proud candor of a man who can see things from his own side only in the article by Lord Roberts in the current number of The Hibbert Journal (October 1914.) There you shall see also, after the usual nonsense about Nietzsche, the vision of "British administrators bearing the White Man's Burden," of "young men, fresh from the public schools of Britain, coming eagerly forward to carry on the high traditions of Imperial Britain in each new dependency which comes under our care," of "our fitness as an Imperial race," of "a great task committed to us by Providence," of "the will to conquer that has never failed us," of our task of "assuming control of one fifth of the earth's surface and the care of one in five of all the inhabitants of the world." Not a suggestion that the inhabitants of the world are perhaps able to take care of themselves. Not even a passing recollection when that White Man's Burden is in question that the men outside the British Empire, and even inside the German Empire, are by no means exclusively black. Only the *sancta simplicitas* that glories in "the proud position of England," the "sympathy, tolerance, prudence, and benevolence of our rule" in the east (as shewn, the Kaiser is no doubt sarcastically remarking, in the Delhi sedition trial), the chivalrous feeling that it is our highest duty to save the world from the horrible misfortune of being governed by anybody but those young men fresh from the public schools of Britain. Change the words Britain and British to Germany and German, and the Kaiser will sign the article with enthusiasm. *His* opinion, *his* attitude (subject to that merely verbal change) word for word.

Now, please observe that I do not say that the agitation was unreasonable. I myself steadily advocated the formation of a formidable armament, and ridiculed the notion that we, who are

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

wasting hundreds of millions annually on idlers and wasters, could not easily afford double, treble, quadruple our military and naval expenditure. I advocated the compulsion of every man to serve his country, both in war and peace. The idlers and wasters, perceiving dimly that I meant the cost to come out of their pockets, and meant to use the admission that riches should not exempt a man from military service as an illustration of how absurd it is to allow them to exempt him from civil service, did not embrace my advocacy with enthusiasm; so I must reaffirm it now lest it should be supposed that I am condemning those whose proceedings I am describing. Though often horribly wrong in principle, they were quite right in practice as far as they went. But they must stand to their guns now that the guns are going off. They must not pretend that they were harmless Radical lovers of peace, and that the propaganda of Militarism and of inevitable war between England and Germany is a Prussian infamy for which the Kaiser must be severely punished. That is not fair, not true, not gentlemanly. We began it; and if they met us half-way, as they certainly did, it is not for us to reproach them. When the German fire-eaters drank to The Day (of Armageddon) they were drinking to the day of which our Navy League fire-eaters had first said "It's bound to come." Therefore let us have no more nonsense about the Prussian Wolf and the British Lamb, the Prussian Machiavelli and the English Evangelist. We cannot shout for years that we are boys of the bulldog breed, and then suddenly pose as gazelles. No. When Europe and America come to settle the treaty that will end this business (for America is concerned in it as much as we are) they will not deal with us as the lovable and innocent victims of a treacherous tyrant and a savage soldiery. They will have to consider how these two incorrigibly pugnacious and inveterately snobbish peoples, who have snarled at one another for forty years with bristling hair and grinning fangs, and are now rolling over with their teeth in oneanother's throats, are to be tamed into trusty watchdogs of the peace of the world. I am sorry to spoil the saintly image with a halo which the British Jingo jour-

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

nalist sees just now when he looks in the glass; but it must be done if we are to behave reasonably in the imminent day of reckoning.

And now back to Friedrich von Bernhardi.

Like many soldier-authors, Friedrich is very readable; and he maintains the good and formidable part of the Bismarck tradition: that is, he is not a humbug. He looks facts in the face; he deceives neither himself nor his readers; and if he were to tell lies—as he would no doubt do as stoutly as any British, French, or Russian officer if his country's safety were at stake—he would know that he was telling them. Which last we think very bad taste on his part, if not downright wickedness.

It is true that he cites Frederick the Great as an exemplary master of war and of *Weltpolitik*. But his chief praise in this department is reserved for England. It is from our foreign policy, he says, that he has learnt what our journalists denounce as "the doctrine of the bully, of the materialist, of the man with gross ideals: a doctrine of diabolical evil." He frankly accepts that doctrine from us (as if our poor honest muddleheads had ever formulated anything so intellectual as a doctrine), and blames us for nothing but for allowing the United States to achieve their solidarity and become formidable to us when we might have divided them by backing up the South in the Civil War. He shews in the clearest way that if Germany does not smash England, England will smash Germany by springing at her the moment she can catch her at a disadvantage. In a word he prophesies that we, his great masters in *Realpolitik*, will do precisely what our Junkers have just made us do. It is we who have carried out the Bernhardi program: it is Germany who has neglected it. He warned Germany to make an alliance with Italy, Austria, Turkey, and America, before undertaking the subjugation, first of France, then of England. But a prophet is not without honor save in his own country; and Germany has allowed herself to be caught with no ally but Austria between France and Russia, and thereby given the English Junkers their opportunity. They have seized it with a punctuality that must flatter Von

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

Bernhardi, even though the compliment be at the expense of his own country. The Kaiser did not give them credit for being keener Junkers than his own. It was an unpleasant, indeed an infuriating surprise. All that a Kaiser could do without unbearable ignominy to induce them to keep their bulldogs off and give him fair play with his two redoubtable foes, he did. But they laughed Frederick the Great's laugh and hurled all our forces at him, as he might have done to us, on Bernhardian principles, if he had caught us at the same disadvantage. Officially, the war is Junker-cut-Junker. Militarist-cut-Militarist; and we must fight it out, not *Heuchler-cut-Hypocrite*, but hammer and tongs.

Unofficially, it is quite another matter. Democracy, even Social-Democracy, though as hostile to British Junkers as to German ones, and under no illusion as to the obsolescence and colossal stupidity of modern war, need not lack enthusiasm for the combat, which may serve its own ends better than those of its political opponents. For Bernhardi the Brilliant and our own very dull Militarists are alike mad: the war will not do any of the things for which they rushed into it. It is much more likely to do the things they most dread and deprecate: in fact, it has already swept them into the very kind of organization they founded an Anti-Socialist League to suppress. To shew how mad they are, let us suppose the war carries out their western program to the last item. Suppose France rises from the war victorious, happy and glorious, with Alsace and Lorraine regained, Rheims cathedral repaired in the best modern trade style, and a prodigious indemnity in her pocket! Suppose we tow the German fleet into Portsmouth, and leave Hohenzollern metaphorically under the heel of Romanoff and actually in a comfortable villa in Chislehurst, the hero of all its tea parties and the judge of all its gymkhanas! Well, cry the Militarists, suppose it by all means: could we desire anything better? Now I happen to have a somewhat active imagination; and it flatly refuses to stop at this convenient point. I must go on supposing. Suppose France, with its military prestige raised once more to the Napoléonic point, spends its indemnity in building an invincible

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Armada, stronger and nearer to us than the German one we are now out to destroy! Suppose Sir Edward Grey remonstrates, and Monsieur Delcassé replies, "Russia and France have humbled one Imperial Bully, and are prepared to humble another. I have not forgotten Fashoda. Stop us if you can; or turn, if you like, for help to the Germany we have smashed and disarmed!" Of what use will all this bloodshed be then, with the old situation reproduced in an aggravated form, the enemy closer to our shores, a raid far more feasible, the tradition of "natural enmity" to steel the foe, and Waterloo to be wiped out like Sedan? A child in arms should be able to see that this idiotic notion of relaxing the military pressure on us by smashing this or that particular Power is like trying to alter the pressure of the ocean by dipping up a bucket of water from the North Sea and pouring it into the Bay of Biscay.

I purposely omit more easterly supposings as to what victorious Russia might do. But a noble emancipation of Poland and Finland at her own expense, and of Bosnia and Herzegovina at Austria's, might easily suggest to our nervous Militarists that a passion for the freedom of Egypt and India might seize her, and remind her that we were Japan's ally in the day of Russia's humiliation in Manchuria. So there at once is your Balance of Power problem in Asia enormously aggravated by throwing Germany out of the anti-Russian scale and grinding her to powder. Even in North Africa—but enough is enough. You can *durch-hauen* your way out of the frying pan, but only into the fire. Better take Nietzsche's brave advice, and make it your point of honor to "live dangerously". History shews that it is often the way to live long.

But let me test the Militarist theory, not by a hypothetical future, but by the accomplished and irrevocable past. Is it true that nations must conquer or go under, and that military conquest means prosperity and power for the victor and annihilation for the vanquished? I have already alluded in passing to the fact that Austria has been beaten repeatedly: by France, by Italy, by Germany, almost by everybody who has thought it worth while to

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

have a whack at her; and yet she is one of the Great Powers; and her alliance has been sought by invincible Germany. France was beaten by Germany in 1870 with a completeness that seemed impossible; yet France has since enlarged her territory whilst Germany is still pleading in vain for a place in the sun. Russia was beaten by the Japanese in Manchuria on a scale that made an end forever of the old notion that the West is the natural military superior of the East; yet it is the terror of Russia that has driven Germany into her present desperate onslaught on France; and it is the Russian alliance on which France and England are depending for their assurance of ultimate success. We ourselves confess that the military efficiency with which we have so astonished the Germans is the effect, not of Waterloo and Inkerman, but of the drubbing we got from the Boers, who would probably have beaten us if we had been anything like their own size. Greece has lately distinguished herself in war within a few years of a most disgraceful beating by the Turks. It would be easy to multiply instances from remoter history: for example, the effect on England's position of the repeated defeats of our troops by the French under Luxembourg in the Balance of Power War at the end of the seventeenth century differed surprisingly little, if at all, from the effect of our subsequent victories under Marlborough. And the inference from the Militarist theory that the States which at present count for nothing as military Powers necessarily count for nothing at all is absurd on the face of it. Monaco seems to be, on the whole, the most prosperous and comfortable State in Europe.

In short, Militarism must be classed as one of the most inconsiderately foolish of the bogus "sciences" which the last half century has produced in such profusion, and which have the common characteristic of revolting all sane souls, and being stared out of countenance by the broad facts of human experience. The only rule of thumb that can be hazarded on the strength of actual practice is that wars to maintain or upset the Balance of Power between States, called by inaccurate people Balance of Power wars, and by accurate people Jealousy of Power wars,

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

never establish the desired peaceful and secure equilibrium. They may exercise pugnacity, gratify spite, assuage a wound to national pride, or enhance or dim a military reputation; but that is all. And the reason is, as I shall shew very conclusively later on, that there is only one way in which one nation can really disable another, and that is a way which no civilized nation dare even discuss.

And now I proceed from general considerations to the diplomatic history of the present case, as I must in order to make our moral position clear. But first, lest I should lose all credit by the startling incompatibility between the familiar personal characters of our statesmen and the diplomacy for which they are officially responsible, I must say a word about the peculiar psychology of English statesmanship, not only for the benefit of my English readers, who do not know that it is peculiar just as they do not know that water has any taste (because it is always in their mouths), but as a plea for more charitable construction from the wider world.

We know by report, however unjust it may seem to us, that there is an opinion abroad, even in the quarters most friendly to us, that our excellent qualities are marred by an incorrigible hypocrisy. To France we have always been *Perfidious Albion*. In Germany, at this moment, that epithet would be scorned as far too flattering to us. Victor Hugo explained the relative unpopularity of *Measure for Measure* among Shakespear's plays on the ground that the character of the hypocrite Angelo was a too faithful dramatization of our national character. Pecksniff is not considered so exceptional an English gentleman in America as he is in England.

Now we have not acquired this reputation for nothing. The world has no greater interest in branding England with this particular vice of hypocrisy than in branding France with it; yet the world does not cite *Tartuffe* as a typical Frenchman as it cites Angelo and Pecksniff as typical Englishmen. We may protest against it as indignantly as the Prussian soldiers protest against their equally universal reputation for ferocity in plunder and pillage, sack and rapine; but there is something in it. If you judge

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

an English statesman by his conscious intentions, his professions, and his personal charm, you will often find him an amiable, upright, humane, anxiously truthful man. If you judge him, as a foreigner must, solely on the official acts for which he is responsible, and which he has to defend in the House of Commons for the sake of his party, you will often be driven to conclude that this estimable gentleman is, in point of being an unscrupulous superprig and fool, worse than Cæsar Borgia and General Von Bernhardi rolled into one, and in foreign affairs a Bismarck in everything except commanding ability, blunt common sense, and freedom from illusion as to the nature and object of his own diplomacy. And the permanent officials in whose hands he is will probably deserve all this and something to spare. Thus you will get that amazing contrast that confronts us now between the Machiavellian Sir Edward Grey of the Berlin newspapers and the amiable and popular Sir Edward Grey we know in England. In England we are all prepared to face any World Congress and say "We know that Sir Edward Grey is an honest English gentleman, who meant well as a true patriot and friend of peace; we are quite sure that what he did was fair and right; and we will not listen to any nonsense to the contrary." The Congress will reply, "We know nothing about Sir Edward Grey except what he did; and as there is no secret and no question as to what he did, the whole story being recorded by himself, we must hold England responsible for his conduct, whilst taking your word for the fact, which has no importance for us, that his conduct has nothing to do with his character."

The general truth of the situation is, as I have spent so much of my life in trying to make the English understand, that we are cursed with a fatal intellectual laziness, an evil inheritance from the time when our monopoly of coal and iron made it possible for us to become rich and powerful without thinking or knowing how: a laziness which is becoming highly dangerous to us now that our monopoly is gone or superseded by new sources of mechanical energy. We got rich by pursuing our own immediate advantage instinctively: that is, with a natural childish selfishness;

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

and when any question of our justification arose, we found it easy to silence it with any sort of plausible twaddle (provided it flattered us, and did not imply any trouble or sacrifice) provided by our curates at £70 a year, or by journalists employed by commercial moralists with axes to grind. In the end we became fat-headed, and not only lost all intellectual consciousness of what we were doing, and with it all power of objective self-criticism, but stacked up a lumber of pious phrases for ourselves which not only satisfied our corrupted and half-atrophied consciences, but gave us a sense that there is something extraordinarily ungentlemanly and politically dangerous in bringing these pious phrases to the test of conduct. We carried Luther's doctrine of Justification by Faith to the insane point of believing that as long as a man says what we have agreed to accept as the right thing it does not matter in the least what he actually does. In fact, we do not clearly see why a man need introduce the subject of morals at all, unless there is something questionable to be whitewashed. The unprejudiced foreigner calls this hypocrisy: that is why we call him prejudiced. But I, who have been a poor man in a poor country, understand the foreigner better.

Now from the general to the particular. In describing the course of the diplomatic negotiations by which our Foreign Office achieved its design of at last settling accounts with Germany at the most favorable moment from the Militarist point of view, I shall have to exhibit our Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs as behaving almost exactly as we have accused the Kaiser of behaving. Yet I see him throughout as an honest gentleman, "perplexed in the extreme," meaning well, revolted at the last moment by the horror of war, clinging to the hope that in some vague way he could persuade everybody to be reasonable if they would only come and talk to him as they did when the big Powers were kept out of the Balkan war, but hopelessly destitute of a positive policy of any kind, and therefore unable to resist those who had positive business in hand. And do not for a moment imagine that I think that the conscious Sir Edward Grey was Othello, and the subconscious, Iago. I do think that the Foreign

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

Office, of which Sir Edward is merely the figurehead, was as deliberately and consciously bent on a long deferred Militarist war with Germany as the Admiralty was; and that is saying a good deal. If Sir Edward Grey did not know what he wanted, no such perplexity troubled Mr Winston Churchill. He was not an "ist" of any sort, but a straightforward holder of the popular opinion that if you are threatened you should hit out, unless you are afraid to. Had he had the conduct of the affair he might quite possibly have averted the war (and thereby greatly disappointed himself and the British public) by simply frightening the Kaiser. As it was, he had arranged for the co-operation of the French and British fleets; was spoiling for the fight; and must have restrained himself with great difficulty from taking off his coat in public whilst Mr Asquith and Sir Edward Grey were giving the country the assurances which were misunderstood to mean that we were not bound to go to war, and not more likely to do so than usual. But though Sir Edward did not clear up the misunderstanding, I think he went to war with the heavy heart of a Junker Liberal (such centaurs exist) and not with the exultation of a Junker Jingo.

I may now, without more than the irreducible minimum of injustice to Sir Edward Grey, proceed to tell the story of the diplomatic negotiations as they will appear to the Congress which, I am assuming, will settle the terms on which Europe is to live more or less happily ever after.

The evidence of how the Junker diplomats of our Foreign Office let us in for the war is in the White Paper, Miscellaneous No. 6 (1914), containing correspondence respecting the European crisis, and since reissued, with a later White Paper and some extra matter, as a penny bluebook in miniature. In these much-cited and little-read documents we see the Junkers of all the nations, the men who have been saying for years "It's bound to come," and clamoring in England for compulsory military service and expeditionary forces, momentarily staggered and not a little frightened by the sudden realization that it has come at last. They rush round from foreign office to embassy, and from embassy to palace, twittering "This is awful. Can't you stop it? Won't you be

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

reasonable? Think of the consequences," etc., etc. One man among them keeps his head and looks the facts in the face. That man is Sazonoff, the Russian Secretary for Foreign Affairs. He keeps steadily trying to make Sir Edward Grey face the inevitable. He says and reiterates, in effect, "You know very well that you cannot keep out of a European war. You know you are pledged to fight Germany if Germany attacks France. You know that your arrangements for the fight are actually made; that already the British army is commanded by a Franco-British Council of War; that there is no possible honorable retreat for you. You know that this old man in Austria, who would have been superannuated years ago if he had been an exciseman, is resolved to make war on Servia, and sent that silly forty-eight hours ultimatum when we were all out of town so that he could begin fighting before we could get back to sit on his head. You know that he has the Jingo mob of Vienna behind him. You know that if he makes war, Russia must mobilize. You know that France is bound to come in with us as you are with France. You know that the moment we mobilize, Germany, the old man's ally, will have only one desperate chance of victory, and that is to overwhelm our ally, France, with one superb rush of her millions, and then sweep back and meet us on the Vistula. You know that nothing can stop this except Germany remonstrating with Austria, and insisting on the Servian case being dealt with by an international tribunal and not by war. You know that Germany dares not do this, because her alliance with Austria is her defence against the Franco-Russian alliance, and that she does not want to do it in any case, because the Kaiser naturally has a strong class prejudice against the blowing up of Royal personages by irresponsible revolutionists, and thinks nothing too bad for Servia after the assassination of the Archduke. There is just one chance of avoiding Armageddon: a slender one, but worth trying. You averted war in the Algeciras crisis, and again in the Agadir crisis, by saying you would fight. Try it again. The Kaiser is stiffnecked because he does not believe you are going to fight this time. Well, convince him that you are. The odds against him will then be so

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

terrible that he may not dare to support the Austrian ultimatum to Servia at such a price. And if Austria is thus forced to proceed judicially against Servia, we Russians will be satisfied; and there will be no war."

Sir Edward could not see it. He is a member of a Liberal Government in a country where there is no political career for the man who does not put his party's tenure of office before every other consideration. What would *The Daily News* and *The Manchester Guardian* have said had he, Bismarck-like, said bluntly: "If war once breaks out, the old score between England and Prussia will be settled, not by ambassadors' tea parties and Areopaguses, but by blood and iron"? In vain did Sazonoff repeat, "But if you are going to fight, as you know you are, why not say so?" Sir Edward, being Sir Edward and not Winston Churchill or Lloyd George, could not admit that he was going to fight. He might have forestalled the dying Pope and his noble Christian "I bless peace" by a noble, if heathen, "I fight war." Instead, he persuaded us all that he was under no obligation whatever to fight. He persuaded Germany that he had not the slightest serious intention of fighting. Sir Owen Seaman wrote in *Punch* an amusing and witty No-Intervention poem. Sporting Liberals offered any odds that there would be no war for England. And Germany, confident that with Austria's help she could break France with one hand and Russia with the other if England held aloof, let Austria throw the match into the magazine.

Then the Foreign Office, always acting through its amiable and popular but confused instrument Sir Edward, unmasked the Junker-Militarist battery. He suddenly announced that England must take a hand in the war, though he did not yet tell the English people so, it being against the diplomatic tradition to tell them anything until it is too late for them to object. But he told the German Ambassador. Prince Lichnowsky, caught in a death trap, pleaded desperately for peace with Great Britain. Would we promise to spare Germany if Belgium were left untouched? No. Would we say on what conditions we would spare Germany? No. Not if the Germans promised not to annex French territory?

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

No. Not even if they promised not to touch the French colonies? No. Was there no way out? Sir Edward Grey was frank. He admitted there was just one chance: that Liberal opinion might not stand the war if the neutrality of Belgium were not violated. And he provided against that chance by committing England to the war the day before he let the cat out of the bag in Parliament.

All this is recorded in the language of diplomacy in the White Paper on or between the lines. That language is not so straightforward as my language; but at the crucial points it is clear enough. Sazonoff's tone is politely diplomatic in No. 6; but in No. 17 he lets himself go. "I do not believe that Germany really wants war; but her attitude is decided by yours. If you take your stand firmly with France and Russia there will be no war. If you fail them now, rivers of blood will flow, and you will in the end be dragged into war." He was precisely right; but he did not realize that war was exactly what our Junkers wanted. They did not dare to tell themselves so; and naturally they did not dare to tell him so. And perhaps his own interest in war was too strong to make him regret the rejection of his honest advice. To break up the Austrian Empire and achieve for Russia the Slav Caliphate of South-East Europe whilst defeating Prussia with the help of France and of Russia's old enemy and Prussia's old ally England, was a temptation so enormous that Sazonoff, in resisting it so far as to shew Sir Edward Grey frankly the only chance of preventing it, proved himself the most genuine humanitarian in the diplomatic world.

The decisive communication between Sir Edward Grey and Prince Lichnowsky is recorded in the famous No. 123. With the rather childish subsequent attempt to minimize No. 123 on the ground that the Prince was merely an amiable nincompoop who did not really represent his fiendish sovereign, neither I nor any other serious person need be concerned. What is beyond all controversy is that after that conversation Prince Lichnowsky could do nothing but tell the Kaiser that the *Entente*, having at last got his imperial head in chancery, was not going to let him off on any terms, and that it was now a fight to a finish between

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

the British and German empires. Then the Kaiser said: "We are Germans. God help us!" When a crowd of foolish students came cheering for the war under his windows, he bade them go to the churches and pray. His telegrams to the Tsar (the omission of which from the penny bluebook is, to say the least, not chivalrous) were dignified and pathetic. And when the Germans, taking a line from the poet they call "unser Shakespeare," said: "Come the four quarters of the world in arms and we shall shock them," it was, from the romantic militarist point of view, fine. What Junker-led men could do they have since done to make that thrasonical brag good. But there is no getting over the fact that, in Tommy Atkins's phrase, they had asked for it. Their Junkers, like ours, had drunk to *The Day*; and they should not have let us choose it after riling us for so many years. And that is why Sir Edward had a great surprise when he at last owned up in Parliament.

The moment he said that we could not "stand aside with our arms folded" and see our friend and neighbor France "bombarded and battered," the whole nation rose to applaud him. All the Foreign Office mistrust of public opinion, the concealment of the Anglo-French plan of campaign, the disguise of the *Entente* in a quaker's hat, the duping of the British public and the Kaiser with one and the same prevarication, had been totally unnecessary and unpopular, like most of these ingenuities which diplomatists think subtle and Machiavellian. The British Public had all along been behind Mr Winston Churchill. It had wanted Sir Edward to do just what Sazonoff wanted him to do, and what I, in the columns of *The Daily News*, proposed he should do nine months ago (I must really be allowed to claim that I am not merely wise after the event), which was to arm to the teeth regardless of an expense which to us would have been a mere fleabite, and tell Germany that if she laid a finger on France we would unite with France to defeat her, offering her at the same time, as consolation for that threat, the assurance that we would do as much to France if she wantonly broke the peace in the like fashion by attacking Germany. No unofficial Englishman worth his salt wanted to snivel

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

hypocritically about our love of peace and our respect for treaties and our solemn acceptance of a painful duty, and all the rest of the nauseous mixture of schoolmaster's twaddle, parish magazine cant, and cinematograph melodrama with which we were deluged. We were perfectly ready to knock the Kaiser's head off just to teach him that if he thought he was going to ride roughshod over Europe, including our new friends the French and the plucky little Belgians, he was reckoning without old England. And in this pugnacious but perfectly straightforward and human attitude the nation needed no excuses because the nation honestly did not know that we were taking the Kaiser at a disadvantage, or that the Franco-Russian alliance had been just as much a menace to peace as the Austro-German one. But the Foreign Office knew it very well, and therefore began to manufacture superfluous, disingenuous, and rather sickening excuses at a great rate. The nation had a clean conscience, and was really innocent of any aggressive strategy: the Foreign Office was redhanded, and did not want to be found out. Hence its sermons.

It was Mr H. G. Wells who at the critical moment spoke with the nation's voice. When he uttered his electric outburst of wrath against "this drilling, trampling foolery in the heart of Europe" he gave expression to the pent-up exasperation of years of smouldering revolt against swank and domineer, guff and bugaboo, calling itself blood and iron, and mailed fist, and God and conscience and anything else that sounded superb. Like Nietzsche, we were "fed up" with the Kaiser's imprisonments of democratic journalists for *Majestätsbeleidigung* (monarch disparagement), with his ancestors, and his mission, and his gospel of submission and obedience for poor men, and of authority, tempered by duelling, for rich men. The world had become sore-headed, and desired intensely that they who clatter the sword shall perish by the sword. Nobody cared twopence about treaties: indeed, it was not for us, who had seen the treaty of Berlin torn up by the brazen seizure of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria in 1909, and taken that lying down, as Russia did, to talk about the sacredness of treaties, even if the waste-paper baskets of the Foreign Offices

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

were not full of torn up “scraps of paper,” and a very good thing too; for General von Bernhardi’s assumption that circumstances alter treaties is not a page from Machiavelli: it is a platitude from the law books. The man in the street understood little or nothing about Servia or Russia or any of the cards with which the diplomats were playing their perpetual game of Beggar my Neighbor. We were rasped beyond endurance by Prussian Militarism and its contempt for us and for human happiness and common sense; and we just rose at it and went for it. We have set out to smash the Kaiser exactly as we set out to smash the Mahdi. Mr Wells never mentioned a treaty. He said, in effect “There stands the monster all freedom-loving men hate; and at last we are going to fight it.” And the public, bored by the diplomats, said: “Now you’re talking!” We did not stop to ask our consciences whether the Prussian assumption that the dominion of the civilized earth belongs to German culture is really any more bumptious than the English assumption that the dominion of the sea belongs to British commerce. And in our island security we were as little able as ever to realize the terrible military danger of Germany’s geographical position between France and England on her west flank and Russia on her east: all three leagued for her destruction; and how unreasonable it was to ask Germany to lose the fraction of a second (much less Sir Maurice de Bunsen’s naïve “a few days delay”) in dashing at her Western foe when she could obtain no pledge as to Western intentions. “We are now in a state of necessity; and Necessity knows no law” said the Imperial Chancellor in the Reichstag. “It is a matter of life and death to us” said the German Minister for Foreign Affairs to our Ambassador in Berlin, who had suddenly developed an extraordinary sense of the sacredness of the Treaty of London, dated 1839, and still, as it happened, inviolate among the torn fragments of many subsequent and similar “scraps of paper.” Our Ambassador seems to have been of Sir Maurice’s opinion that there could be no such tearing hurry. The Germans could enter France through the line of forts between Verdun and Toul if they were really too flustered to wait a few days on the chance of Sir Edward Grey’s persuasive

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

conversation and charming character softening Russia and bringing Austria to conviction of sin. Thereupon the Imperial Chancellor, not being quite an angel, asked whether we had counted the cost of crossing the path of an Empire fighting for its life (for these Militarist statesmen do really believe that nations can be killed by cannon shot). That was a threat; and as we cared nothing about Germany's peril, and wouldnt stand being threatened any more by a Power of which we now had the inside grip, the fat remained in the fire, blazing more fiercely than ever. There was only one end possible to such a clash of high tempers, national egotisms, and reciprocal ignorances.

It seemed a splendid chance for the Government to place itself at the head of the nation. But no British Government within my recollection has ever understood the nation. Mr Asquith, true to the Gladstonian tradition (hardly just to Gladstone, by the way) that a Liberal Prime Minister should know nothing concerning foreign policies and care less, and calmly insensible to the real nature of the popular explosion, fell back on 1839, picking up the obvious barrister's point about the violation of the neutrality of Belgium, and trying the equally obvious barrister's claptrap about "an infamous proposal" on the jury. He assured us that nobody could have done more for peace than Sir Edward Grey, though the rush to smash the Kaiser was the most popular thing Sir Edward had ever done.

Besides, there was another difficulty. Mr Asquith himself, though serenely persuaded that he is a Liberal statesman, is, in effect, very much what the Kaiser would have been if he had been a Yorkshireman and a lawyer instead of being only half English and the other half Hohenzollern, and an anointed emperor to boot. As far as popular liberties are concerned, history will make no distinction between Mr Asquith and Metternich. He is forced to keep on the safe academic ground of Belgium by the very obvious consideration that if he began to talk of the Kaiser's imprisonments of editors and democratic agitators and so forth, a Homeric laughter, punctuated with cries of "How about Denshaw?" "What price Tom Mann?" "Votes for women!" "Been in

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

India lately?" "Make McKenna Kaiser, or dear old Herbert Gladstone," etc., etc., would promptly spoil that pose. The plain fact is that, Militarism apart, Germany is in many ways more democratic in practice than England: indeed the Kaiser has been openly reviled as a coward by his Junkers because he falls short of Mr Asquith in calm indifference to Liberal principles and blank ignorance of working-class sympathies, opinions, and interests.

Mr Asquith had also to distract public attention from the fact that three official members of his Government, all men of unquestioned and conspicuous patriotism and intellectual honesty, walked straight out into private life on the declaration of war. One of them, Mr John Burns, did so at an enormous personal sacrifice, and has since maintained a grim silence far more eloquent than the famous speech Germany invented for him. It is not generally believed that these three statesmen were actuated by a passion for the violation of Belgian neutrality.

On the whole, it was impossible for the Government to seize its grand chance and put itself at the head of the popular movement that responded to Sir Edward Grey's declaration: the very simple reason being that the Government does not represent the nation, and is in its sympathies just as much a Junker government as the Kaiser's. And so, what the Government cannot do has to be done by unofficial persons with clean and brilliant anti-Junker records like Mr Wells, Mr Arnold Bennett, Mr Neil Lyons, and Mr Jerome K. Jerome. Neither Mr Asquith nor Sir Edward Grey can grasp, as these real spokesmen of their time do, the fact that we just simply want to put an end to Potsdamnation, both at home and abroad. Both of them probably think Potsdam a very fine and enviable institution, and want England to out-Potsdam Potsdam and to monopolize the command of the seas: a monstrous aspiration. We, I take it, want to guarantee that command of the sea which is the common heritage of mankind to the tiniest States and the humblest fishermen that depend on the sea for a livelihood. We want the North Sea to be as safe for everybody, English or German, as Portland Place.

And now somebody who would rather I had not said all this

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

(having probably talked dreadful nonsense about Belgium and so forth for a month past) is sure to ask "Why all this recrimination? What is done is done. Is it not now the duty of every Englishman to sink all differences in the face of the common peril?" etc., etc. To all such prayers to be shielded from that terrible thing, the truth, I must reply that history consists mainly of recrimination, and that I am writing history because an accurate knowledge of what has occurred is not only indispensable to any sort of reasonable behavior on our part in the face of Europe when the inevitable day of settlement comes, but because it has a practical bearing on the most perilously urgent and immediate business before us: the business of the appeal to the nation for recruits and for enormous sums of money. It has to decide the question whether that appeal shall be addressed frankly to our love of freedom, and our tradition (none the less noble and moving because it is so hard to reconcile with the diplomatic facts) that England is a guardian of the world's liberty, and not to bad law about an obsolete treaty, and cant about the diabolical personal disposition of the Kaiser, and the wounded propriety of a peace-loving England, and all the rest of the slosh and tosh that has been making John Bull sick for months past. No doubt at first, when we were all clasping one another's hands very hard and begging one another not to be afraid, almost anything was excusable. Even the war notes of Mr Garvin, which stood out as the notes of a gentleman amid a welter of scurrilous rubbish and a rather black-guardly Punch cartoon mocking the agony of Berlin (Punch having turned its non-interventionist coat very promptly), had sometimes to run: "We know absolutely nothing of what is happening at the front, except that the heroism of the British troops will thrill the ages to the last syllable of recorded time" or words to that effect. But now it is time to pull ourselves together; to feel our muscle; to realize the value of our strength and pluck; and to tell the truth unashamed like men of courage and character, not to shirk it like the official apologists of a Foreign Office plot.

And first, as I despise critics who put people in the wrong without being able to set them right, I shall, before I go any

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

further with my criticism of our official position, do the Government and the Foreign Office the service of finding a correct official position for them; for I admit that the popular position, though sound as far as it goes, is too crude for official use. This correct official position can be found only by considering what Germany should have done, and might have done had she not been, like our own Junkers, so fascinated by the Militarist craze, and obsessed by the chronic Militarist panic, that she was "in too great a hurry to bid the devil good morning." The matter is simple enough: she should have entrusted the security of her western frontier to the public opinion of the west of Europe and to America, and fought Russia, if attacked, with her rear not otherwise defended. The Militarist theory is that we, France and England, would of course have immediately sprung at her from behind; but that just shews how the Militarist theory gets its votaries into trouble by assuming that Europe is a chess board. Europe is not a chess board; but a populous continent in which only a very few people are engaged in military chess; and even those few have many other things to consider besides capturing their adversary's king. Not only would it have been impossible for England to have attacked Germany under such circumstances; but if France had done so England could not have assisted her, and might even have been compelled by public opinion to intervene by way of a joint protest from England and America, or even by arms, on her behalf if she were murderously pressed on both flanks. Even our Militarists and diplomatists would have had reasons for such an intervention. An aggressive Franco-Russian hegemony, if it crushed Germany, would be quite as disagreeable to us as a German one. Thus Germany would at worst have been fighting Russia and France with the sympathy of all the other Powers, and a chance of active assistance from some of them, especially those who share her hostility to the Russian Government. Had France not attacked her—and though I am as ignorant of the terms of the Franco-Russian alliance as Sir Edward Grey is strangely content to be, I cannot see how the French Government could have justified to its own people a fearfully

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

dangerous attack on Germany had Russia been the aggressor —Germany would have secured fair play for her fight with Russia. But even the fight with Russia was not inevitable. The ultimatum to Servia was the escapade of a dotard: a worse crime than the assassination that provoked it. There is no reason to doubt the conclusion in Sir Maurice de Bunsen's despatch (No. 161) that it could have been got over, and that Russia and Austria would have thought better of fighting and come to terms. Peace was really on the cards; and the sane game was to play for it.

Instead, Germany flew at France's throat, and by incidentally invading Belgium gave us the excuse our Militarists wanted to attack her with the full sympathy of the nation. Why did she do this stupid thing? Not because of the counsels of General Von Bernhardi. On the contrary, he had warned her expressly against allowing herself to be caught between Russia and a Franco-British combination until she had formed a counterbalancing alliance with America, Italy, and Turkey. And he had most certainly not encouraged her to depend on England sparing her: on the contrary, he could not sufficiently admire the wily ruthlessness with which England watches her opportunity and springs at her foe when the foe is down. (He little knew, poor man, how much he was flattering our capacity for *Realpolitik*!) But he had reckoned without his creed's fatal and fundamental weakness, which is, that as Junker-Militarism promotes only stupid people and snobs, and suppresses genuine realists as if they were snakes, it always turns out when a crisis arrives that "the silly people dont know their own silly business." The Kaiser and his ministers made an appalling mess of their job. They were inflamed by Bernhardi; but they did not understand him. They swallowed his flattery, but did not take in his strategy or his warnings. They knew that when the moment came to face the Franco-Russian alliance, they were to make a magnificent dash at France and, having swept her pieces off the great chess board before the Russians had time to mobilize, return and crush Russia, leaving the conquest of England for another day. This was honestly as much as their heads could hold at one time; and they were helplessly unable to consider whether

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

the other conditions postulated by Bernhardi were present, or indeed, in the excitement of their schoolboyish imaginations, to remember whether he had postulated any at all. And so they made their dash and put themselves in the wrong at every point morally, besides making victory humanly impossible for themselves militarily. That is the nemesis of Militarism: the Militarist is thrown into a big game which he is too stupid to be able to play successfully. Philip of Spain tried it 300 years ago; and the ruin he brought on his empire has lasted to this day. He was so stupid that though he believed himself to be the chosen instrument of God (as sure a sign of a hopeless fool in a man who cannot see that every other man is equally an instrument of that Power as it is a guarantee of wisdom and goodwill in the man who respects his neighbor as himself) he attempted to fight Drake on the assumption that a cannon was a weapon that no real gentleman and good Catholic would descend to handle. Louis XIV tried again two centuries ago, and, being a more frivolous fool, got beaten by Marlborough and sent his great-grandson from the throne to the guillotine. Napoleon tried it 100 years ago. He was more dangerous, because he had prodigious personal ability and technical military skill; and he started with the magnificent credential of the French Revolution. That equipment carried him farther than the Spanish bigot or the French fop; but he, too, accreted fools and knaves, and ended defeated in St Helena after pandering for twenty years to the appetite of idiots for glory and bloodshed; waging war as "a great game" and finding in a field strewn with corpses "*un beau spectacle.*" In short, as strong a magnet to fools as the others, though so much abler.

Now comes the question, in what position did this result of a mad theory and a hopelessly incompetent application of it on the part of Potsdam place our own Government? It left us quite clearly in the position of the responsible policeman of the west. There was nobody else in Europe strong enough to chain "the mad dog." Belgium and Holland, Norway and Sweden, Denmark and Switzerland could hardly have been expected to take that duty on themselves, even if Norway and Sweden had not good

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

reason to be anti-Russian, and the Dutch capitalists were not half convinced that their commercial prosperity would be greater under German than under native rule. It will not be contended that Spain could have done anything; and as to Italy, it was doubtful whether she did not consider herself still a member of the Triple Alliance. It was evidently England or nobody. For England to have refrained from hurling herself into the fray, horse, foot, and artillery, was impossible from every point of view. From the democratic point of view it would have meant an acceptance of the pretension of which Potsdam, by attacking the French Republic, had made itself the champion: that is, the pretension of the Junker class to dispose of the world on Militarist lines at the expense of the lives and limbs of the masses. From the international Socialist point of view, it would have been the acceptance of the extreme nationalist view that the people of other countries are foreigners, and that it does not concern us if they choose to cut one another's throats. Our Militarist Junkers cried "If we let Germany conquer France it will be our turn next." Our romantic Junkers added "and serve us right too: what man will pity us when the hour strikes for us, if we skulk now?" Even the wise, who loathe war, and regard it as such a dishonor and disgrace in itself that all its laurels cannot hide its brand of Cain, had to admit that police duty is necessary and that war must be made on such war as the Germans had made by attacking France in an avowed attempt to substitute a hegemony of cannon for the comity of nations. There was no alternative. Had the Foreign Office been the International Socialist Bureau, had Sir Edward Grey been Jaurès, had Mr Ramsay MacDonald been Prime Minister, had Russia been Germany's ally instead of ours, the result would still have been the same: we must have drawn the sword to save France and smash Potsdam as we smashed and always must smash Philip, Louis, Napoleon, *et hoc genus omne.*

The case for our action is thus as complete as any *casus belli* is ever likely to be. In fact its double character as both a democratic and military (if not Militarist) case makes it too complete; for it enables our Junkers to claim it entirely for themselves, and to fake

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

it with pseudo-legal justifications which destroy nine-tenths of our credit, the military and legal cases being hardly a tenth of the whole: indeed, they would not by themselves justify the slaughter of a single Pomeranian grenadier. For instance, take the Militarist view that we must fight Potsdam because if the Kaiser is victorious it will be our turn next! Well: are we not prepared to fight always when our turn comes? Why should not we also depend on our navy, on the extreme improbability of Germany, however triumphant, making two such terrible calls on her people in the same generation as a war involves, on the sympathy of the defeated, and on the support of American and European public opinion when our turn comes, if there is nothing at stake now but the difference between defeat and victory in an otherwise indifferent military campaign? If the welfare of the world does not suffer any more by an English than by a German defeat who cares whether we are defeated or not? As mere competitors in a race of armaments and an Olympic game conducted with ball cartridge, or as plaintiffs in a technical case of international law (already decided against us in 1870, by the way, when Gladstone had to resort to a new treaty made *ad hoc* and lapsing at the end of the war) we might as well be beaten as not, for all the harm that will ensue to anyone but ourselves, or even to ourselves apart from our national vanity. It is as the special constables of European life that we are important, and can send our men to the trenches with the assurance that they are fighting in a worthy cause. In short, the Junker case is not worth twopence: the Democratic case, the Socialist one, the International case is worth all it threatens to cost.

What is the German reply to this case? Or rather, how would the Germans reply to it if their official Militarist and Kaiserist panjandrums had the wit to find the effective reply? Undoubtedly they would say that our Social-Democratic professions are all very fine, but that our conversion to them is suspiciously sudden and recent. They would remark that it is a little difficult for a nation in deadly peril to trust its existence to a foreign public opinion which has not only never been expressed by the people

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

who really control England's foreign policy, but is flatly opposed to all their known views and prejudices. They would ask why, instead of making an *Entente* with France and Russia and refusing to give Germany any assurance concerning its object except that we would not pledge ourselves to remain neutral if the Franco-Russian *Entente* fell on Germany, we did not say straight out in 1912 (when they put the question flatly to us), and again last July when Sazonoff urged us so strongly to shew our hand, that if Germany attacked France we should fight her, Russia or no Russia (a far less irritating and provocative attitude), although we knew full well that an attack on France through Belgium would be part of the German program if the Russian peril became acute. They would point out that if our own Secretary for Foreign Affairs openly disclaimed any knowledge of the terms of the Franco-Russian alliance, it was hard for a German to believe that they were wholly fit for publication. In short, they would say "If you were so jolly wise and well intentioned before the event, why did not your Foreign Minister and your ambassadors in Berlin and Vienna and St Petersburgh—we beg pardon, Petrograd—invite us to keep the peace and rely on western public opinion instead of refusing us every pledge except the hostile one to co-operate with France against us in the North Sea, and making it only too plain to us that your policy was a Junker policy as much as ours, and that we had nothing to hope from your goodwill? What evidence had we that you were playing any other game than this Militarist chess of our own, which you now so piously renounce, but which none of you except a handful of Socialists whom you despise, and Syndicalists whom you imprison on Militarist pretexts, has opposed for years past, though it has been all over your Militarist anti-German platforms and papers and magazines? Are your Social-Democratic principles sincere? or are they only a dagger you keep up your sleeve to stab us in the back when our two most formidable foes are trying to garotte us? If so, where does your moral superiority come in, hypocrites that you are? If not, why, we repeat, did you not make them known to all the world, instead of making an ambush for us

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

by your senseless silence?"

I see no reply to this except a frank confession that we did not know our own minds; that we came to a knowledge of them only when Germany's attack on France forced us to make them up at last; that though doubtless a chronic state of perfect lucidity and long prevision on our part would have been highly convenient, yet there is a good deal to be said for the policy of not fording a stream until you come to it; and that in any case we must entirely decline to admit that we are more likely than other people to do the wrong thing when circumstances at last oblige us to think and act. Also that the discussion is idle on the shewing of the German case itself; for whether the Germans assumed us to be unscrupulous Militarists or conscientious Democrats they were bound to come to the same conclusion: namely, that we should attack them if they attacked France; consequently their assumption that we would not interfere must have been based on the belief that we are simply contemptible, which is the sort of mistake people have to pay for in this wicked world.

On the whole, we can hector our way in the Prussian manner out of that discussion well enough, provided we hold our own in the field. But the Prussian manner hardly satisfies the conscience. True, the fact that our diplomatists were not able to discover the right course for Germany does not excuse Germany for being unable to find it for herself. Not that it was more her business than ours: it was a European question, and should have been solved by the united counsels of all the ambassadors and Foreign Offices and chanceries. Indeed it could not have been stably solved without certain assurances from them. But it was, to say the least, as much Germany's business as anyone else's, and terribly urgent for her: "a matter of life and death," the Imperial Chancellor thought. Still, it is not for us to claim moral superiority to Germany. It was for us a matter of the life and death of many Englishmen; and these Englishmen are dead because our diplomatists were as blind as the Prussians. The war is a failure for secret Junker diplomacy, ours no less than the enemy's. Those of us who have still to die must be inspired, not by devotion to the

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

diplomatists, but, like the Socialist hero of old on the barricade, by the vision of "human solidarity." And if he purchases victory for that holy cause with his blood, I submit that we cannot decently allow the Foreign Office to hang up his martyr's palm over the War Office mantelpiece.

The Foreign Office, however, can at least shift its ground, and declare for the good cause instead of belittling it with quibbling excuses. For see what the first effect of the nonsense about Belgium has been! It carried with it the inevitable conclusion that when the last German was cleared off Belgian soil, peace-loving England, her reluctant work in this shocking war done, would calmly retire from the conflict, and leave her Allies to finish the deal with Potsdam. Accordingly, after Mr Asquith's oration at the Mansion House, the Allies very properly insisted on our signing a solemn treaty between the parties that they must all stand together to the very end. A pitifully thin attempt has been made to represent that the mistrusted party was France, and that the Kaiser was trying to buy her off. All one can say to that is that the people who believe that a French Government dare face the French people now with anything less than Alsace and Lorraine as the price of peace, or that an undefeated and indeed masterfully advancing German Kaiser (as he seemed then) dared offer France such a price, would believe anything. Of course we had to sign; but if the Prime Minister had not been prevented by his own past from taking the popular line, we should not have been suspected of a possible backing-out when the demands of our sanctimoniousness were satisfied. He would have known that we are not vindicating a treaty which by accident remains among the fragments of treaties of Paris, of Prague, of Berlin, of all sorts of places and dates, as the only European treaty that has hitherto escaped flat violation: we are supporting the war as a war on war, on military coercion, on domineering, on bullying, on brute force, on military law, on caste insolence, on what Mrs Fawcett called insensate devilry (only to find the papers explaining apologetically that she, as a lady, had of course been alluding to war made by foreigners, not by England). Some of us, remem-

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

bering the things we have ourselves said and done, may doubt whether Satan can cast out Satan; but as the job is not exactly one for an unfallen angel, we may as well let him have a try.

In the meantime behold us again hopelessly outwitted by Eastern diplomacy as a direct consequence of this ill-starred outburst of hypocrisy about treaties! Everybody has said over and over again that this war is the most tremendous war ever waged. Nobody has said that this new treaty is the most tremendous blank cheque we have ever been forced to sign by our Parliamentary party trick of striking moral attitudes. It is true that Mr J. A. Hobson realized the situation at once, and was allowed to utter a little croak in a corner; but where was the trumpet note of warning that should have rung throughout the whole Press? Just consider what the blank cheque means. France's draft on it may stop at the cost of recovering Alsace and Lorraine. We shall have to be content with a few scraps of German colony and the heavy-weight championship. But Russia? When will she say "Hold! Enough!"? Suppose she wants not only Poland, but Baltic Prussia? Suppose she wants Constantinople as her port of access to the unfrozen seas, in addition to the dismemberment of Austria? Suppose she has the brilliant idea of annexing all Prussia, for which there is really something to be said by ethnographical map-makers, Militarist madmen, and Pan-Slavist megalomaniacs. It may be a reasonable order; but it is a large one; and the fact that we should have been committed to it without the knowledge of Parliament, without discussion, without warning, without any sort of appeal to public opinion or democratic sanction, by a stroke of Sir Edward Grey's pen within five weeks of his having committed us in the same fashion to an appalling European war, shews how completely the Foreign Office has thrown away all pretence of being any less absolute than the Kaiser himself. It simply offers carte blanche to the armies of the Allies without a word to the nation until the cheque is signed. The only limit there is to the obligation is the certainty that the cheque will be dishonored the moment the draft on it becomes too heavy. And that may furnish a virtuous pretext for another war between the Allies

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

themselves. In any case no treaty can save each Ally from the brute necessity of surrendering and paying up if beaten, whether the defeat be shared by the others or not. Did I not say that the sooner we made up our minds to the terms of the treaty of peace, so that we might know what we were fighting for, and how far we were bound to go, the better? Instead of which we sign a ridiculous "scrap of paper" to save ourselves the intolerable fatigue of thought.

And now, before I leave the subject of Belgium, what have we done for Belgium? Have we saved her soil from invasion? Were we at her side with half a million men when the avalanche fell on her? Or were we safe in our own country praising her heroism in paragraphs which all contrived to convey an idea that the Belgian soldier is about four feet high, but immensely plucky for his size? Alas, when the Belgian soldier cried: "Where are the English?" the reply was "a mass of concrete as large as a big room," blown into the air by a German siege gun, falling back and crushing him into the earth we had not succeeded in saving from the worst of the horrors of war. We have not protected Belgium: Belgium has protected us at the cost of being conquered by Germany. It is now our sacred duty to drive the Germans out of Belgium. Meanwhile we might at least rescue her refugees by a generous grant of public money from the caprices of private charity. We need not press our offer to lend her money: German capitalists will do that for her with the greatest pleasure when the war is over. I think the Government realizes that now; for I note the after-thought that a loan from us need not bear interest.

Now that we begin to see where we really are, what practical morals can we draw?

First, that our autocratic foreign policy, in which the Secretary for Foreign Affairs is always a Junker and makes war and concludes war without consulting the nation, or confiding in it, or even refraining from deceiving it as to his intentions, leads inevitably to a disastrous combination of war and unpreparedness for war. Wars are planned which require huge expeditionary armies trained and equipped for war. But as such preparation could not

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

be concealed from the public, it is simply deferred until the war is actually declared and begun, at the most frightful risk of such an annihilation of our little peace army as we escaped by the skin of our teeth at Mons and Cambrai. The military experts tell us that it takes four months to make an infantry and six to make a cavalry soldier. And our way of getting an army able to fight the German army is to declare war on Germany just as if we had such an army, and then trust to the appalling resultant peril and disaster to drive us into wholesale enlistment, voluntary or (better still from the Junker point of view) compulsory. It seems to me that a nation which tolerates such insensate methods and outrageous risks must shortly perish from sheer lunacy. And it is all pure superstition: the retaining of the methods of Edward the First in the reign of George the Fifth. I therefore suggest that the first lesson of the war is that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs be reduced to the level of a simple Prime Minister, or even of a constitutional monarch, powerless to fire a single shot or sign a treaty without the authority of the House of Commons, all diplomatic business being conducted in a blaze of publicity, and the present regulation which exacts the qualification of a private income of at least £400 a year for a position in the Diplomatic Service replaced by a new regulation that at least half the staff shall consist of persons who have never dined out at the houses of hosts of higher rank than unfashionable solicitors or doctors.

In these recommendations I am not forgetting that an effective check on diplomacy is not easy to devize, and that high personal character and class disinterestedness (the latter at present unattainable) on the part of our diplomatists will be as vital as ever. I well know that diplomacy is carried on at present not only by official correspondence meant for possible publication and subject to an inspection which is in some degree a responsible inspection, but by private letters which the King himself has no right to read. I know that even in the United States, where treaties and declarations of war must be made by Parliament, it is nevertheless possible for the President to bring about a situation in which Congress, like our House of Commons in the present instance,

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

has no alternative but to declare war. But though complete security is impracticable, it does not follow that no precautions should be taken, or that a Democratic tradition is no safer than a feudal tradition. A far graver doubt is raised by the susceptibility of the masses to war fever, and the appalling danger of a daily deluge of cheap newspapers written by nameless men and women whose scandalously low payment is a guarantee of their ignorance and their servility to the financial department, controlled by a moneyed class which not only curries favor with the military caste for social reasons, but has large direct interests in war as a method of raising the price of money, the only commodity the moneyed class has to sell. But I am quite unable to see that our Junkers are less susceptible to the influence of the Press than the people educated in public elementary schools. On the contrary, our Democrats are more foolproof than our Plutocrats; and the ravings our Junkers send to the papers for nothing in war time would be dear at a halfpenny a line. Plutocracy makes for war because it offers prizes to Plutocrats: Socialism makes for peace because the interests it serves are international. So, as the Socialist side is the democratic side, we had better democratize our diplomacy if we desire peace.

And now as to the question of recruiting. Time is pressing, because it is not enough for the Allies to win: we and not Russia must be the decisive factor in the victory, or Germany will not be fairly beaten, and we shall be only the rescued *protégés* of Russia instead of the saviors of Western Europe. We must have the best army in Europe; and we shall not get it under existing arrangements. We are passing out of the first phase of the war fever, in which men flock to the colors by instinct, by romantic desire for adventure, by the determination not, as Wagner put it, "to let their lives be governed by fear of the end," by simple destitution through unemployment, by rancor and pugnacity excited by the inventions of the Press, by a sense of duty inculcated in platform orations which would not stand half an hour's discussion, by the incitements and taunts of elderly non-combatants and maidens with a taste for mischief, and by the verses of poets jumping at

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

the cheapest chance in their underpaid profession. The difficulty begins when all the men susceptible to these inducements are enlisted, and we have to draw on the solid, sceptical, sensible residuum who know the value of their lives and services and liberties, and will not give them except on substantial and honorable conditions. These Ironsides know that it is one thing to fight for your country, and quite another to let your wife and children starve to save our rich idlers from a rise in the supertax. They also know that it is one thing to wipe out the Prussian drill sergeant and snob officer as the enemies of manhood and honor, and another to let that sacred mission be made an excuse for subjecting us to exactly the same tyranny in England. They have not forgotten the "On the knee" episode, nor the floggings in our military prisons, nor the scandalous imprisonment of Tom Mann, nor the warnings as to military law and barrack life contained even in Robert Blatchford's testimony that the army made a man of him.

And here is where the Labor Party should come in. The Labor Party's business is to abolish the Militarist soldier, who is only a quaint survival of the King's footman (himself a still quainter survival of the medieval baron's retainer), and substitute for him a trained combatant with full civil rights, receiving the Trade Union rate of wages proper to a skilled worker at a dangerous trade. It must co-operate with the Trade Unions in fixing this moral minimum wage for the citizen soldier, and in obtaining for him a guarantee that the wage shall continue until he obtains civil employment on standard terms at the conclusion of the war. It must make impossible the scandal of a monstrously rich peer (his riches, the automatic result of ground landlordism, having "no damned nonsense of merit about them") proclaiming the official weekly allowance for the child of the British soldier in the trenches. That allowance is eighteenpence, being less than one third of the standard allowance for an illegitimate child under an affiliation order. And the Labor Party must deprive the German bullet of its present double effect in killing an Englishman in France and simultaneously reducing his widow's subsistence to seven-and-sixpence a week. Until this is done, we are simply

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

provoking Providence to destroy us.

I wish I could say that it is hardly necessary to add that Trade Unionism must be instituted in the Army, so that there shall be accredited secretaries in the field to act as a competent medium of communication between the men on service and the political representatives of their class at the War Office (for I shall propose this representative innovation presently). It will shock our colonels; but I know of no bodies of men for whom repeated and violent shocking is more needed and more likely to prove salutary than the regimental messes of the British army. One rather pleasant shock in store for them is the discovery that an officer and a gentleman, whose sole professional interest is the honor and welfare of his country, and who is bound to the mystical equality of life-and-death duty for all alike, will get on much more easily with a Trade Union secretary than a commercial employer whose aim is simply private profit and who regards every penny added to the wages of his employees as a penny taken off his own income. Howbeit, whether the colonels like it or not—that is, whether they have become accustomed to it or not—it has to come, and its protection from Junker prejudice is another duty of the Labor Party. The Party as a purely political body must demand that the defender of his country shall retain his full civil rights unimpaired; that the unnecessary, mischievous, dishonorable and tyrannical slave code called military law, which at its most savagely stern point produced only Wellington's complaint that "it is impossible to get a command obeyed in the British Army," be carted away to the rubbish heap of exploded superstitions; and that if Englishmen are not to be allowed to serve their country in the field as freely as they do in the numerous civil industries in which neglect and indiscipline are as dangerous as they are in war, their leaders and Parliamentary representatives will not recommend them to serve at all. In wartime these things may not matter: discipline either goes by the board or keeps itself under the pressure of the enemy's cannon; and bullying sergeants and insolent officers have something else to do than to provoke men they dislike into striking them and then reporting them for

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

two years hard labor without trial by jury. In battle such officers are between two fires. But soldiers are not always, or even often, at war; and the dishonor of abdicating dearly-bought rights and liberties is a stain both on war and peace. Now is the time to get rid of that stain. If any officer cannot command men without it, as civilians and police inspectors do, that officer has mistaken his profession and had better come home.

Another matter needs to be dealt with at the same time. There are immense numbers of atheists in this country; and though most of them, like the Kaiser, regard themselves as devout Christians, the best are intellectually honest enough to object to profess beliefs they do not hold, especially in the solemn act of dedicating themselves to death in the service of their country. Army form E 501 A (September, 1912) secured to these the benefit of the Bradlaugh Affirmation Act of 1888, as the enlisting soldier said simply "I, So and So, do make Oath, &c." But recruits are now confronted with another form (E 501, June, 1914) running "I, So and So, swear by Almighty God, &c." On September 1st, at Lord Kitchener's call, a civil servant obtained leave to enlist and had the oath put to him in this form by the attesting officer. He offered to swear in the 1912 form. This was refused; and we accordingly lost a recruit of just that sturdily conscientious temper which has made the most formidable soldiers known to history. I am bound to add, however, that the attesting officer, on being told that the oath would be a blasphemous farce to the conscience of the recruit, made no difficulty about that, and was quite willing to accept him if he, on his part, would oblige by professing what he did not believe. Thus a Ghoorka's religious conscience is respected: an Englishman's is insulted and outraged.

But, indeed, all these oaths are obstructive and useless superstitions. No recruit will hesitate to pledge his word of honor to fight to the death for his country or for a cause with which he sympathizes; and that is all we require. There is no need to drag in Almighty God and no need to drag in the King. Many an Irishman, many a colonial Republican, many an American volunteer who would fight against the Prussian monarchy shoulder to

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

shoulder with the French Republicans with a will, would rather not pretend to do it out of devotion to the British throne. To vanquish Prussia in this war we need the active aid or the sympathy of every Republican in the world. America, for instance, sympathizes with England, but classes the King with the Kaiser as an obsolete institution. Besides, even from the courtly point of view the situation is a delicate one. Why emphasize the fact that, formally speaking, the war is between two grandsons of Albert the Good, that thoroughbred German whose London monument is so much grander than Cromwell's?

The Labor Party should also set its face firmly against the abandonment of Red Cross work and finance, or the support of soldiers' families, or the patrolling of the streets, to amateurs who regard the war as a wholesome patriotic exercise, or as the latest amusement in the way of charity bazaars, or as a fountain of self-righteousness. Civil volunteering is needed urgently enough: one of the difficulties of war is that it creates in certain departments a demand so abnormal that no peace establishment can cope with it. But the volunteers should be disciplined and paid: we are not so poor that we need sponge on anyone. And in hospital and medical service war ought not at present to cost more than peace would if the victims of our commercial system were properly tended, and our Public Health service adequately extended and manned. We should therefore treat our Red Cross department as if it were destined to become a permanent service. No charity and no amateur anarchy and incompetence should be tolerated. As to allowing that admirable detective agency for the defence of the West End against begging letter writers, the Charity Organization Society, to touch the soldier's home, the very suggestion is an outrage. The C.O.S., the Poor Law, and the charitable amateur, whether of the patronizing or prying or gushing variety, must be kept as far from the army and its folk as if they were German spies. The business of our fashionable amateurs is to pay Income Tax and Supertax. This time they will have to pay through the nose, vigorously wrung for that purpose by the House of Commons; so they had better set their own

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

houses in order and leave the business of the war to be officially and responsibly dealt with and paid for at full standard rates.

But parliamentary activity is not sufficient. There must be a more direct contact between representative Labor and the Army, because Parliament can only remedy grievances, and that not before years of delay and agitation elapse. Even then the grievances are not dealt with on their merits; for under our party system, which is the most abominable engine for the perversion and final destruction of all political conscience ever devized by man, the House of Commons never votes on any question except whether the Government shall remain in office or give the Opposition a turn, no matter what the pretext for the division may be. Only in such emergencies as the present, when the Government is forced to beg the Labor members to help them to recruit, is there a chance of making reasonable conditions for the soldier.

It is therefore necessary that the War Office should have working class representatives on all committees and councils which issue notices to the public. There is at present, it would seem, not a single person in authority there who has the faintest notion of what the immense majority of possible British recruits are thinking about. The results have been beyond description ludicrous and dangerous. Every proclamation is urgently worded so as to reassure recruits with £5000 a year and repel recruits with a pound a week. On the very day when the popular Lord Kitchener, dropping even the *et rex meus* of Wolsey, frankly asked the nation for 100,000 men for his army, and when it was a matter of life and death that every encouragement should be held out to working men to enlist, the War Office decided that this was the psychological moment to remind everybody that soldiers on active service often die of typhoid fever, and to press inoculation on the recruits pending the officially longed-for hour when Sir Almroth Wright's demand for compulsion can be complied with. I say nothing here about the efficacy of inoculation. Efficacious or not, Sir Almroth Wright himself bases his demand for compulsion on the ground that it is hopeless to

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

expect the whole army to submit to it voluntarily. That being so, it seems to me that when men are hesitating on the threshold of the recruiting station, only a German spy or our War Office (always worth ten thousand men to our enemies) would seize that moment to catch the nervous postulant by the sleeve and say "Have you thought of the danger of dysentery?" The fact that the working class forced the Government, very much against its doctor-ridden will, to abolish compulsory vaccination shews the extent to which its households loathe and dread these vaccines (so called, but totally unconnected with cows or Jenner) which, as they are continually reminded by energetic anti-inoculation propagandists in largely circulated journals and pamphlets, not to mention ghastly photographs of disfigured children, sometimes produce worse effects than the diseases they are supposed to prevent. Indifferent or careless recruits are easily induced to submit to inoculation by little privileges during the ensuing indisposition or by small money bribes; and careful ones are proselytized by Sir Almroth's statistics; but on the whole both inoculation and amateur medical statistics are regarded with suspicion by the poor; and the fact that revaccination is compulsory in the regular army, and that the moral pressure applied to secure both typhoid inoculation and vaccination both in the regular army and the Territorials is such as only a few stalwarts are able to resist, is deeply resented. At present the inoculation mania has reached the pitch of proposing no less than four separate inoculations: revaccination, typhoid, cholera, and—Sir Almroth's last stammerer—inoculation against wounds! When the War Office and its medical advisers have been successfully inoculated against political lunacy, it will be time enough to discuss such extravagances. Meanwhile, the sooner the War Office issues a proclamation that no recruit will be either compelled or importuned to submit to any sort of inoculation whatever against his will, the better for the recruiting, and the worse for the enemy.

But this blunder was a joke compared to the next exploit of the War Office. It suddenly began to placard the country with

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

frantic assurances to its five-thousand-a-year friends that they would be "discharged with all possible speed THE MINUTE THE WAR IS OVER." Only considerations of space restrained them, I presume, from adding "LAWN TENNIS, SHOOTING, AND ALL THE DELIGHTS OF FASHIONABLE LIFE CAN BE RESUMED IMMEDIATELY ON THE FIRING OF THE LAST SHOT." Now what does this mean to the wage worker? Simply that the moment he is no longer wanted in the trenches he will be flung back into the labor market to sink or swim without an hour's respite. If we had had a Labor representative or two to help in drawing up these silly placards—I am almost tempted to say if we had had any human being of any class with half the brains of a rabbit there—the placards would have contained a solemn promise that no single man should be discharged at the conclusion of the war, save at his own request, until a job had been found for him in civil life. I ask the heavens, with a shudder, do these class-blinded people in authority really intend to take a million men out of their employment; turn them into soldiers; and then at one blow hurl them back, utterly unprovided for, into the streets?

But a War Office capable of placarding Lord Roberts's declaration that the men who are enlisting are doing "what all able-bodied men in the kingdom should do" is clearly ignorant enough for anything. I do not blame Lord Roberts for his oratorical flourish: we have all said things just as absurd on the platform in moments of enthusiasm. But the officials who reproduced it in cold blood would have us believe that soldiers live on air; that ammunition drops from heaven like manna; and that an army could hold the field for twenty-four hours without the support of a still more numerous body of civilians working hard to support it. Sane men gasp at such placards and ask angrily, "What sort of fools do you take us for?" I have in my hand a copy of The Torquay Times containing a hospitable invitation to soldiers' wives to call at the War Office, Whitehall, S.W., if they desire "assistance and explanation of their case." The return fare from Torquay to London is thirty shillings and sixpence third class; but the War Office no doubt assumes that all soldiers' wives keep

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

motor cars. Still, let us be just even to the War Office. It did *not* ask the soldiers' wives for forms of authorization to pay the separation allowance to their bankers every six months. It actually offered the money monthly!

The middle and upper classes are nearly as bad as the War Office. They talk of keeping every man's place open for him until the end of the war. Obviously this is flatly impossible. Some places can be kept, and no doubt are being kept. Some functions are suspended by the war and cannot be resumed until the troops return to civil life and resume them. Employers are so hardened to the daily commercial necessity for discharging men without a thought as to what is to become of them that they are quite ready to undertake to sack the replacers when the troops come back. Also the return of peace may be followed by a revival of trade in which employment may not be hard to find, even by discharged soldiers, who are always passed over in the labor market in favor of civilians, as those well know who have the task of trying to find places for them. But these considerations do not justify an attempt to persuade recruits that they can go off soldiering for months—they are told by Lord Kitchener that it will probably be for years—and then come back and walk to their benches or into their offices and pick up their work as if they had left only the night before. The very people who are promising this are raising the cry "business as usual" in the same breath. How can business be carried on as usual, or carried on at all, on unoccupied office stools and at counters with no men behind them? Such rubbish is an insult to the recruit's intelligence. These promises of keeping places open were made to the men who enlisted for South Africa, and were of course broken, as a promise to supply green cheese by quarrying the moon would have been broken. New employees must be found to do the work of the men who are in the field; and these new ones will not all be thrown into the street when the war is over to make room for discharged soldiers, even if a good many of these soldiers are not disqualified by their new training and habits for their old employment. I repeat, there is only one assurance that

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

can be given to the recruits without grossly and transparently deluding them; and that is that they shall not be discharged, except at their own request, until civil employment is available for them.

This is not the only instance of the way in which, under the first scare of the war, we shut our eyes and opened our mouths to every folly. For example, there was a cry for the suspension of all controversy in the face of the national danger. Now the only way to suspend controversial questions during a period of intense activity in the very departments in which the controversy has arisen is to allow them all to be begged. Perhaps I should not object if they were all begged in favor of my own side, as, for instance, the question of Socialism was begged in favor of Socialism when the Government took control of the railways; bought up all the raw sugar; regulated prices; guaranteed the banks; suspended the operation of private contracts; and did all the things it had been declaring utterly and eternally Utopian and impossible when Socialists advocated them. But it is now proposed to suspend all popular liberties and constitutional safeguards: to muzzle the Press, and actually to have no contests at bye-elections! This is more than a little too much. We have submitted to have out letters, our telegrams, our newspapers censored, our dividends delayed, our trains cut off, our horses and even our houses commandeered, our streets darkened, our restaurants closed, and ourselves shot dead on the public highways when we were slow to realize that some excited person bawling in the distance was a sentry challenging us. But that we are to be politically gagged and enslaved as well; that the able-bodied soldier in the trenches, who depends on the able-minded civilian at home to guard the liberties of his country and protect him from carelessness or abuse of power by the authorities whom he must blindly and dumbly obey, is to be betrayed the moment his back is turned to his fellow citizens and his face to the foe, is not patriotism: it is the paralysis of mortal funk: it is the worst kind of cowardice in the face of the enemy. Let us hear no more of it, but contest our elections like men, and regain the ancient political

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

prestige of England at home as our expeditionary force has regained it abroad.

The Labor Party, then, need have no hesitation in raising all the standing controversies between Democracy and Junkerism in their acutest form, and taking advantage of the war emergency to press them to a series of parliamentary victories for Labor, whether in negotiations with the Government whips, in divisions on the floor of the House, or in strenuously contested bye-elections. No doubt our Junkers will try to disarm their opponents by representing that it would be in the last degree unfair, un-English, and ungentlemanly on the part of the Labor members to seize any tactical advantage in parliamentary warfare, and most treacherous and unpatriotic to attack their country (meaning the Junker Party) when it is at war. Some Labor members will be easily enough gulled in this way: it would be laughable, if the consequences were not so tragic, to see how our parliamentary beginners from the working class succumb to the charm of the Junker appeal. The Junkers themselves are not to be coaxed in this manner: it is no use offering tracts to a missionary, as the poor Kaiser found when he tried it on. The Labor Party will soon learn the value of these polite demonstrations that it is always its duty not to hamper the governing classes in their very difficult and delicate and dangerous task of safeguarding the interests of this great empire: in short, to let itself be gammoned by elegant phrases and by adroit practisings on its personal good-nature, its inveterate proletarian sentimentality, and its secret misgivings as to the correctness of its manners. The Junkers have already taken the fullest advantage of the war to paralyze democracy. If the Labor members do not take a vigorous counter-offensive, and fight every parliamentary trench to the last division, the Labor Movement will be rushed back as precipitately as General von Kluck rushed the Allies back from Namur to the gates of Paris. In truth, the importance of the war to the immense majority of Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Germans lies in the possibility that when Junkers fall out common men may come by their own.

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

So much for the recruiting. Now for the terms of peace. It is time to take that subject in hand; for Lord Kitchener's notion that we are going to settle down to years of war as we did a century ago is soldierly, but not sensible. It is, of course, physically possible for us to continue for twenty years digging trenches and shelling German troops and shoving German armies back when they are not shoving us, whilst old women pull turnips and tend goats in the fire zones across which soldiers run to shelter. But we cannot afford to withdraw a million male adults who have passed a strictish health test from the work of parentage for several years unless we intend to breed our next generation from parents with short sight, varicose veins, rotten teeth, and deranged internal organs. Soldiers do not think of these things: "theirs not to reason why: theirs but to do and die"; but sensible civilians have to. And even soldiers know that you cannot make ammunition as fast as you can burn it, nor produce men and horses as instantaneously as you can kill them by machinery. It would be well, indeed, if our papers, instead of writing of ten-inch shells, would speak of £1000 shells, and regimental bands occasionally finish the National Anthem and the Brabançonne and the Marseillaise with the old strain "That's the way the money goes: Pop goes the Ten Inch." It is easy to rebuke Mr Norman Angell and Herr Bloch for their sordid references to the cost of war; and Mr H. G. Wells is profoundly right in pointing out that the fact that war does not pay commercially is greatly to its credit, as no high human activity ever does pay commercially. But modern war does not even pay its way. Already our men have "pumped lead" into retreating Germans who had no lead left to pump back again; and sooner or later, if we go on indefinitely, we shall have to finish the job with our fists, and congratulate ourselves that both Georges Carpentier and Bombardier Wells are on our side. This war will stop when Germany throws up the sponge, which will happen long before she is utterly exhausted, but not before we ourselves shall be glad enough of a rest. Nations are like bees: they cannot kill except at the cost of their own lives.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

The question of terms will raise a fierce controversy. At the extremes of our public opinion we have two temperaments. First, our gentlemen, our sportsmen, our dare-devils, our *preux chevaliers*. To these the notion of reviling your enemy when he is up; kicking him when he is knocked down by somebody else; and gouging out his eyes, cutting out his tongue, hewing off his right arm, and stealing all his money, is abhorrent and cowardly. These gallants say, "It is not enough that we can fight Germany today. We can fight her any day and every day. Let her come again and again and yet again. We will fight her one to three; and if she comes on ten to one, as she did at Mons, we will mill on the retreat, and drive her back again when we have worn her down to our weight. If her fleet will not come out to fight us because we have too many ships, we will send all the odds in our favor back to Portsmouth and fight ship to ship in the North Sea, and let the bravest and best win." That is how gallant fighters talk, and how Drake is popularly (though erroneously) supposed to have tackled the Armada.

But we are not all *preux chevaliers*. We have at the other extremity the people who are craving for loot and vengeance, who clamor for the humiliation and torture of the enemy, who rave against the village burnings and shootings by the Prussians in one column and exult in the same proceedings by the Russians in another, who demand that German prisoners of war shall be treated as criminals, who depict our Indian troops as savage cut-throats because they like to think of their enemies being mauled in the spirit of the Indian Mutiny, who shriek that the Kaiser must be sent to Devil's Island because St Helena is too good for him, and who declare that Germany must be so maimed and trodden into the dust that she will not be able to raise her head again for a century. Let us call these people by their own favorite name, Huns, even at the risk of being unjust to the real Huns. And let us send as many of them to the trenches as we can possibly induce to go, in the hope that they may presently join the lists of the missing. Still, as they rather cling to our soil, they will have to be reckoned with when the settlement comes. But they

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

will not count for much then. Most of them will be heartily ashamed of what they said in those first three or four weeks of blue funk (I am too timid myself not to make allowances for that most distressing and universal, but fortunately transient effect of war); and most of those who are not will be ashamed to bear malice publicly.

Far more weighty in the matter will be the intermediate sections. First, our commercial main body, which thinks that chivalry is not business, and that rancor is childish, but cannot see why we should not make the Germans pay damages and supply us with some capital to set the City going again, forgetting that when France did that after 1871 for Berlin, Berlin was set going so effectually that it went headlong to a colossal financial smash, whilst the French peasant who had provided the capital from his old stocking threw soberly on the interest at the expense of less vital classes. Unfortunately Germany has set the example of this kind of looting. Prussian generals, like Napoleon's marshals, have always been shameless brigands, keeping up the seventeenth and eighteenth century tradition of making cities bribe them to refrain from sack and pillage and even billeting, and being quite incapable of the magnanimity of the great Condé (or was it Turenne?), who refused a payment offered by a city on the ground that he had not intended to march through it. Blucher's fury when Wellington would not allow him to plunder Paris, and his exclamation when he saw London "What a city to loot!" is still regarded as fair soldiering; and the blackmail levied recently by the Prussian generals on the Belgian and French towns they have occupied must, I suppose, be let pass as ransom, not as ordinary criminal looting. But if the penalty of looting be thus spared, the Germans can hardly complain if they are themselves held to ransom when the fortunes of war go against them. Liège and Lille and Antwerp and the rest must be paid their money back with interest; and there will be a big builder's bill at Rheims. But we should ourselves refrain strictly from blackmail. We should sell neither our blood nor our mercy. If we sell either we are as much brigands as Blucher was.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

And we must not let ourselves be tempted to soil our hands under pretext of vindictive damages. The man who thinks that all the money in Germany could pay for the life of a single British drummer boy ought to be shot merely as an expression of the feeling that he is unfit to live. We stake our blood as the Germans stake theirs; and in that *ganz besonderes Saft* alone should we pay or accept payment. We had better not say to the Kaiser at the end of the war "Scoundrel: you can never replace the Louvain library, nor the sculpture of Rheims; and it follows logically that you shall empty your pockets into ours." Much better say: "God forgive us all!" If we cannot rise to this, and must soil our hands with plunder, at least let us call it plunder, and not profane our language and our souls by giving it fine names.

Then we shall have the Militarists, who will want to have Germany "bled white," dismembered, broken, starved, so that she may never do it again. Well, that is quite simple, if you are Militarist enough to do it. Loading Germany with debt will not do it. Towing her fleet into Portsmouth or sinking it will not do it. Annexing provinces and colonies will not do it. The effective method is far shorter and more practical. What has made Germany formidable in this war? Obviously her overwhelmingly superior numbers. That was how she rushed us back almost to the gates of Paris. The organization, the readiness, the sixteen-inch howitzer helped; but it was the multitudinous *Kanonenfutter* that nearly snowed us under. The British soldier at Cambrai and Le Cateau killed and killed until his rifle was too hot to hold and his hand was paralyzed with slayer's cramp; but still they came and came.

Well, there is no obscurity about that problem. Those Germans who took but an instant to kill had taken the travail of a woman for three-quarters of a year to breed, and eighteen years to ripen for the slaughter. All we have to do is to kill, say, 75 per cent of all the women in Germany under sixty. Then we may leave Germany her fleet and her money, and say "Much good may they do you!" Why not, if you are really going in to be what you, never having read "this Neech they talk of," call a

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

Nietzschean Superman? War is not an affair of sentiment. Some of our newspapers complain that the Germans kill the wounded and fire on field hospitals and Red Cross Ambulances. These same newspapers fill their columns with exultant accounts of how our wounded think nothing of modern bullet wounds and hope to be back at the front in a week, which I take to be the most direct incitement to the Germans to kill the wounded that could be devised. It is no use being virtuously indignant: "stone dead hath no fellow" is an English proverb, not a German one. Even the killing of prisoners is an Agincourt tradition. Now it is not more cowardly to kill a woman than to kill a wounded man. And there is only one reason why it is a greater crime to kill a woman than a man, and why women have to be spared and protected when men are exposed and sacrificed. That reason is that the destruction of the women is the destruction of the community. Men are comparatively of no account: kill 90 per cent of the German men, and the remaining 10 per cent can repeople her. But kill the women, and *Delenda est Carthago*. Now this is exactly what our Militarists want to happen to Germany. Therefore the objection to killing women becomes in this case the reason for doing it. Why not? No reply is possible from the Militarist disable-your-enemy point of view. If disablement is your will, there is your way, and the only effectual way. We really must not call the Kaiser and Von Bernhardi disciples of the mythical Needh when they have either overlooked or shrunk from such a glaring "biological necessity." A pair of puling pious sentimentalists if you like. But Supermen! Nonsense. O my brother journalists, if you must revile the Prussians, call them sheep led by snobs, call them beggars on horseback, call them sausage eaters, depict them in the good old English fashion in spectacles and comforter, seedy overcoat buttoned over paunchy figure, playing the contra-bass tuba in a street band; but do not flatter them with the heroic title of Superman, and hold up as magnificent villainies worthy of Milton's Lucifer these common crimes of violence and raid and lust that any drunken blackguard can commit when the police are away, and that no

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

mere multiplication can dignify. As to Nietzsche, with his Polish hatred of Prussia (who heartily reciprocated the sentiment), when did he ever tell the Germans to allow themselves to be driven like sheep to the slaughter in millions by mischievous dolts who, being for the most part incapable of reading ten sentences of a philosophic treatise without falling asleep, allow journalists as illiterate as themselves to persuade them that he got his great reputation by writing a cheap gospel for bullies? Strictly between ourselves, we also are an illiterate people; but we may at least hold our tongues about matters we dont understand, and not say in the face of Europe that the English believe that the composer of Parsifal was a Militarist Prussian (he was an exiled revolutionist); that Nietzsche was a disciple of Wagner (Nietzsche preferred the music of Bizet, a Frenchman); and that the Kaiser is a disciple of Nietzsche, who would have laughed his childish pietism to scorn.

Nietzsche would certainly have agreed that we must kill the German women if we mean business when we talk of destroying Germany. But he would also have answered my Why not?, which is more than any consistent Militarist can. Indeed, it needs no philosopher to give the answer. The first ordinary anti-Militarist human person you meet will tell you that it would be too horrible; that life would be unbearable if people did such things. And he would be quite right; so please let us hear no more of kicking your enemy when he is down so that he may be unable to rise for a whole century. We may be unable to resist the temptation to loot Germany more or less if we conquer her. We are already actively engaged in piracy against her, stealing her ships and selling them in our prize courts, instead of honestly detaining them until the war is over and keeping a strict account for them. When gentlemen rise in the House of Commons and say that they owe Germans money and do not intend to pay it, one must face the fact that there will be a strong popular demand for plunder. War, after all, is simply a letting loose of organized murder, theft, and piracy on a foe; and I have no doubt the average Englishman will say to me what Falstaff said to Pistol

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

concerning his share in the price of the stolen fan: "Reason, you rogue, reason: do you think I'll endanger my soul *gratis*?" To which I reply, "If you cant resist the booty, take it frankly, and know yourself for half patriot, half brigand; but dont talk nonsense about disablement. Cromwell tried it in Ireland. He had better have tried Home Rule. And what Cromwell could not do to Ireland we cannot do to Germany."

Finally we come to the only body of opinion in which there is any hope for civilization: the opinion of the people who are bent, not on gallantry nor revenge nor plunder nor pride nor panic nor glory nor any of the invidiousnesses of patriotism, but on the problem of how to so redraw the map of Europe and reform its political constitutions that this abominable crime and atrocious nuisance, a European war, shall not easily occur again. The map is very important; for the open sores which have at last suppulated and burst after having made the world uneasy for years, were produced by altering the color of Alsace and Lorraine and of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the map. And the new map must be settled, not by conquest, but by consent of the people immediately concerned. One of the broken treaties of Europe which has been mentioned less frequently of late than the Belgian treaty is the treaty of Prague, by which a plebiscite was to have been taken on the subject of the nationality of Schleswig and Holstein. That plebiscite has never been taken. It may have to be taken, with other plebiscites, before this war is settled.

But here let me warn those who are hoping for a disintegrated Germany like that which Thackeray ridiculed, that their hopes are vain. The southern Germans, the friendliest, most easy-going people in the world (as far as I know the world), dislike the Prussians far more heartily than we do; but they know that they are respected and strong and big as part of United Germany, and that they were weak and despised and petty as separate kingdoms. Germany will hold together. No doubt the Germans may reasonably say to the Prussian drill sergeant and his master Hohenzollern, "A nice mess you have made of your job after all we have endured from you because we believed you could make

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

us invincible. We thought that if you were hard masters you were at any rate good grenadiers; but here are these piffling little Belgians, and these Russians who were beaten by the Japanese, and these English who made such a poor show against a handful of Boer farmers, fighting and organizing just as well as you. So, as the French and English are organized as a republic and an extremely limited monarchy, we will try how that sort of constitution will suit us." But they will not break up: on the contrary, they are much more likely to extend the German community by incorporating German Austria. And as this would raise the question whether Hohenzollern or Hapsburg should rule the roost, the simplest solution would be to get rid of them both, and take the sooner or later inevitable step into the democratic republican form of Government to which Europe is visibly tending, though "this king business," as my American correspondents call it, has certain conveniences when it is limited and combined with an aristocracy also limited by primogeniture and politically controlled by a commonalty into which all but the eldest brothers in the aristocratic families fall, thus making the German segregation of the *adeel* class impossible. Such a monarchy, especially when the monarch is a woman, as in Holland today, and in England under Victoria, is a fairly acceptable working substitute for a formal republic in old civilizations with inveterate monarchical traditions, absurd as it is in new and essentially democratic States. At any rate, it is conceivable that the western allies might demand the introduction of some such political constitution in Germany and Austria as a guarantee; for though the demand would not please Russia, some of Russia's demands will not please us; and there must be some give and take in the business.

Let us consider this possibility for a moment. First, it must be firmly postulated that civilized nations cannot have their political constitutions imposed on them from without if the object of the arrangement is peace and stability. If a victorious Germany were to attempt to impose the Prussian constitution on France and England, they would submit to it just as Ireland

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

submitted to Dublin Castle, which, to say the least, would not be a millennial settlement. Profoundly as we are convinced that our Government of India is far better than any native Indian government could be (the assumption that "natives" could govern at all being made for the sake of argument with due reluctance), it is quite certain that until it becomes as voluntary as the parliamentary government of Australia, and has been modified accordingly, it will remain an artificial, precarious, and continually threatened political structure. Nevertheless, we need not go to the opposite extreme and conclude that a political constitution must fit a country so accurately that it must be home-made to measure. Europe has a stock of ready-made constitutions, both Monarchical and Republican, which will fit any western European nation comfortably enough. We are at present considerably bothered by the number of Germans who, though their own country and constitution is less than a day's journey away, settle here and marry Englishwomen without feeling that our constitution is unbearable. Englishmen are never tired of declaring that "they do things better abroad" (as a matter of fact they often do), and that the ways of Prussia are smarter than the ways of Paddington. It is therefore quite possible that a reach-me-down constitution proposed, not by the conquerors, but by an international congress with no interest to serve but the interests of peace, might prove acceptable enough to a nation thoroughly disgusted with its tyrants.

Now a congress which undertook the Liberalization of Germany would certainly not stop there. If we invite a congress to press for democratization of the German constitution, we must consent to the democratization of our own. If we send the Kaiser to St Helena (or whatever the title of the Chislehurst villa may be) we must send Sir Edward Grey there, too. For if on the morrow of the peace we may all begin to plot and plan one another's destruction over again in the secrecy of our Foreign Offices, so that in spite of Parliament and free democratic institutions the Foreign Secretary may at any moment step down from the Foreign Office to the House of Commons and say, "I arranged

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

yesterday with the ambassador from Cocagne that England is to join his country in fighting Brobdingnag; so vote me a couple of hundred million, and off with you to the trenches," we shall be just where we were before as far as any likelihood of putting an end to war is concerned. The congress will certainly ask us to pledge ourselves that if we shake the mailed fist at all we shall shake it publicly, and that though we may keep our sword ready (let me interject in passing that disarmament is all nonsense: nobody is going to disarm after this experience) it shall be drawn by the representatives of the nation, and not by Junker diplomats who despise and mistrust the nation, and have planned war behind its back for years. Indeed they will probably demur to its being drawn even by the representatives of the nation until the occasion has been submitted to the judgment of the representatives of the world, or such beginnings of a world representative body as may be possible. That is the true *Weltpolitik*.

The main business of the settlement, then, if it is to have any serious business at all, must be the establishment of a Hegemony of Peace, as desired by all who are really capable of high civilization, and formulated by me in the daily Press in a vain attempt to avert this mischief whilst it was brewing. Nobody took the smallest public notice of me; so I made a lady in a play say "Not bloody likely," and instantly became famous beyond the Kaiser, beyond the Tsar, beyond Sir Edward Grey, beyond Shakespear and Homer and President Wilson, the papers occupying themselves with me for a whole week just as they are now occupying themselves with the war, and one paper actually devoting a special edition to a single word in my play, which is more than it has done for the Treaty of London (1839). I concluded then that this was a country which really could not be taken seriously. But the habits of a lifetime are not so easily broken; and I am not afraid to produce another dead silence by renewing my good advice, as I can easily recover my popularity by putting still more shocking expressions into my next play, especially now that events have shewn that I was right on the point of foreign policy.

I repeat, then, that there should be a definite understanding

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

that whatever may happen or not happen further east, England, France, and Germany solemnly pledge themselves to maintain the internal peace of the west of Europe, and renounce absolutely all alliances and engagements that bind them to join any Power outside the combination in military operations, whether offensive or defensive, against one inside it. We must get rid of the monstrous situation that produced the present war. France made an alliance with Russia as a defence against Germany. Germany made an alliance with Austria as a defence against Russia. England joined the Franco-Russian alliance as a defence against Germany and Austria. The result was that Germany became involved in a quarrel between Austria and Russia. Having no quarrel with France, and only a second-hand quarrel with Russia, she was, nevertheless, forced to attack France in order to disable her before she could strike Germany from behind when Germany was fighting France's ally, Russia. And this attack on France forced England to come to the rescue of England's ally, France. Not one of the three nations (as distinguished from their tiny Junker-Militarist cliques) wanted to fight; for England had nothing to gain and Germany had everything to lose; whilst France had given up hope of her Alsace-Lorraine *revanche*, and would certainly not have hazarded a war for it. Yet because Russia, who has a great deal to gain by victory and nothing except military prestige to lose by defeat, had a quarrel with Austria over Servia, she has been able to set all three western friends and neighbors shedding "rivers of blood" from one another's throats: an outrageous absurdity. Fifty years ago the notion of England helping Russia and Japan to destroy Germany would have seemed as suicidal as Canada helping the Apaches to destroy the United States of America; and though we now think much better of the Japanese (and also, by the way, of the Apaches), that does not make us any the more patient with the man who burns down his own street because he admires the domestic architecture of Yokohama, especially when the fire presently spreads to the cathedral of Rheims. It is bad enough that we should have betrayed oriental Persia to oriental Russia as we did (and got nothing for our pains

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

but what we deserved); but when it comes to sacrificing occidental Germany to her as well, we are sharpening a knife for our own occidental throat. The Russian Government is the open enemy of every liberty we boast of. Charles I's unsuccessful attempt to arrest five members of the House of Commons for disagreeing with him is ancient history here: it occurred 272 years ago; but the Tsar's successful attempt to arrest thirty members of the Duma and to punish them as dangerous criminals is a fact of today. Under Russian government people whose worst crime is to find *The Daily News* a congenial newspaper are hanged, flogged, or sent to Siberia as a matter of daily routine; so that before 1906 even the articles in *The Times* on such events as the assassinations of Bobrikoff and the Grand Duke were simply polite paraphrases of "Serve him right." It may be asked why our newspapers have since ceased to report examples of Russia's disregard of the political principles we are supposed to stand for. The answer is simple. It was in 1906 that we began to lend Russia money, and Russia began to advertize in *The Times*. Since then she has been welcome to flog and hang her H. G. Wellses and Lloyd Georges by the dozen without a word of remonstrance from our plutocratic Press, provided the interest is paid punctually. Russia has been embraced in the large charity of cosmopolitan capital, the only charity that does not begin at home.

And here I must save my face with my personal friends who are either Russians or discoverers of the soul of the Russian people. I hereby declare to Sasha Kropotkin and Cunningham Graham that my heart is with their Russia, the Russia of Tolstoy and Turgenieff and Dostoieffsky, of Gorki and Tchekoff, of the Moscow Art Theatre and the Drury Lane Ballet, of Peter Kropotkin and all the great humanitarians, great artists, and charming people whom their very North German Tsars exile and imprison and flog and generally do what in them lies to suppress and abolish. For the sake of Russian Russia I am prepared to strain every point in Prussian Russia's favor. I grant that the Nihilists, much as we loved them, were futile romantic people who could have done nothing if Alexander II had abdicated and offered

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

them the task of governing Russia instead of persecuting them and being finally blown to bits by them. I grant that the manners of the Fins to the Russians are described as insufferable both by the Swedes and the Russians, and that we never listened to the Russian side of that story. I am ready to grant Gilbert Murray's plea that the recent rate of democratic advance has been greater in Russia than anywhere else in Europe, though it does remind me a little of the bygone days when the Socialists, scoring 20 votes at one general election and 40 at the next, were able to demonstrate that their gain of 100 per cent was immensely in excess of the wretched two or three per cent that was the best the Unionists or Liberals could shew. I am willing to forget how short a time it is since Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman said: "The Duma is dead: long live the Duma!" and since we refused to allow the Tsar to land in England when his ship was within gangway's length of our shore, on which occasion I myself held up the Anglo-Russian agreement for the partition of Persia to the execration of a crowd in Trafalgar Square, whilst our Metropolitan Police snatched the *Tsarbeleidigend* English newspapers from the sellers and tore them up precisely in the Cossack manner. I have an enormous relish for the art of Russia; I perceive a spirit in Russia which is the natural antidote to Potsdamnation; and I like most of the Russians I know quite unaffectedly. I could find it in my heart to reproach the Kaiser for making war on the Russia of these delightful people, just as I like to think that at this very moment good Germans may be asking him how he can bring himself to discharge shrapnel at the England of Bernard Shaw and Cunninghamame Graham. History may not forgive him for it; but the practical point at the moment is that he does it, and no doubt attributes the perfidy of England to the popularity of our works. And as we have to take the Kaiser as we find him, and not as the Hohenzollern legend glorifies him, I have to take the Tsar as I find him. When we fight the Kaiser we are not fighting Bach and Wagner and Strauss, to whom we have just joyfully surrendered without a blow at the battle of Queen's Hall, but all the forces in Germany that made things hard for

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Wagner and Strauss. And when we fight for the Tsar we are not fighting for Tolstoy and Gorki, but for the forces that Tolstoy thundered against all his life and that would have destroyed him had he not been himself a highly connected Junker as well as a revolutionary Christian. And if I doubt whether the Tsar would feel comfortable as a member of a Democratic League of Peace, I am not doubting the good intent of Kropotkin: I am facing the record of Kropotkin's imperial jailer, and standing on the proud fact that England is the only country in Europe, not excepting even France, in which Kropotkin has been allowed to live a free man, and had his birthday celebrated by public meetings all over the country, and his articles welcomed by the leading review. In point of fact, it is largely on Kropotkin's account that I regard the Tsar as a gentleman of slightly different views to President Wilson, and hate the infamous tyranny of which he is the figurehead as I hate the devil. And I know that practically all our disinterested and thoughtful supporters of the war feel deeply uneasy about the Russian alliance. At all events, I should be trifling grossly with the facts of the situation if I pretended that the most absolute autocracy in Europe, commanding an inexhaustible army in an invincible country with a dominion stretching from the Baltic to the Pacific, may not, if it achieves a military success against the most dreaded military Power in Europe, be stirred to ambitions far more formidable to western liberty and human welfare than those of which Germany is now finding out the vanity after worrying herself and everyone else with them for forty years.

When all is said that can be said for Russia, the fact remains that a forcibly Russianized German province would be just such another open sore in Europe as Alsace-Lorraine, Poland, Macedonia, or Ireland. It is useless to dream of guarantees: if Russia undertook to govern democratically she would not be able to redeem her promise: she would do better with primitive Communism. Her city populations may be as capable of Democracy as our own (it is, alas! not saying much); but the overwhelming mass of peasants to whom the Tsar is a personal God will for a long time to come make his bureaucracy irresistible. As against

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

Russian civilization German and Austrian civilization is our civilization: there is no getting over that. A constitutional kingship of Poland and a sort of Caliphate of the Slavs in remapped south-eastern Europe, with that access to warm sea water which is Russia's common human right, valid against all Balances of Power and Keys to India and the like, must be her reward for her share in the war, even if we have to internationalize Constantinople to secure it to her. But it cannot be too frankly said at the outset that any attempt to settle Europe on the basis of the present hemming in of a consolidated Germany and German Austria by a hostile combination of Russia and the extreme western States against it, would go to pieces by its own inherent absurdity, just as it has already exploded most destructively by its own instability. Until Russia becomes a federation of several separate democratic States, and the Tsar is either promoted to the honorable position of hereditary President or else totally abolished, the eastern boundary of the League of Peace must be the eastern boundary of Swedish, German, and Italian civilization; and Poland must stand between it and the quite different, and for the moment unassimilable, civilization of Russia, whose friendship we could not really keep on any other terms, as a closer alliance would embarrass her as much as it would embarrass us. Meanwhile, we must trust to the march of Democracy to de-Russianize Berlin and de-Prussianize Petrograd, and to put the nagaikas of the Cossacks and the riding-whips with which Junker officers slash German privates, and the forty tolerated homosexual brothels of Berlin, and all the other psychopathic symptoms of over-feeding and inculcated insolence and sham virility in their proper place, which I take to be the dustbin.

But I must here warn everyone concerned that the most formidable opposition to the break-up of these unnatural alliances between east and west, between Democracy and Autocracy, between the twentieth century and the Dark Ages, will not come from the Balancers of Power. They are not really Balance of Power alliances: in fact, they are tending to an enormous overbalance of power in favor of the east as against the west and in favor of

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Militarist Autocracy as against Democracy. They are at root absolutely unpatriotic, even absolutely conscienceless products of commercial finance; and the Balance of Power theories are only the attempts of our diplomats to put a public-spirited face on the operations of private cupidity. This is not the first time nor the second that I have had to urge that the greatest danger to us in the sphere of foreign politics is the tendency of capital to run away from civilization: the one running downhill to hell as naturally as the other struggles uphill to the Celestial City. The Englishman is allowed to produce the subsistence of himself and his family only on condition that he produces the subsistence of the capitalist and his retinue as well; and lo! he finds more and more of this subsistence produced by Russians, South Americans, Kaffirs, Persians, or yellow or black barbarians armed for his destruction (not to mention Prussians and Austrians), and that the treaties made by our diplomatists have less and less to do with the security of the nation or the balance of power or any other public business, and more and more with capitalist opportunities of making big dividends out of slavish labor. For instance, the Anglo-Russian agreement is not a national treaty: it is the memorandum of a commercial agreement settling what parts of Persia are to be exploited by the Russian and English capitalists respectively: the capitalists, always against State interference for the benefit of the people, being strongly in favor of it for supplanting strikers at home and keeping foreign rivals off their grass abroad. And the absurd part of it is that when the State had thus arranged for our capitalists to exploit certain parts of Persia, and for their sakes to protect the parliamentary liberties of the part left to Russia, they discovered that, after all, the most profitable game was to lend Russia the money to exploit with, and to facilitate the operation by allowing her to destroy the Persian parliament in the face of our own exhortation to it to keep its lamp alight as a herald star of Democracy in the east.

French capitalists had dragged France into an alliance with Russia long before this; but the French Republic had the excuse of the German peril and the need for an anti-German ally. Her

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

natural ally for that purpose was England; but as there was no market in England for her money, her plutocrats drove her into the alliance with Russia as well; and it is that alliance and not the alliance with England that has terrified Germany into flying at her throat and plunging Europe into a frightful war. The natural alliance with England twice averted war, in the Moroccan crises of Algeciras and Agadir, when Sir Edward Grey said boldly that we should defend France, and took the first steps towards a joint military and naval control of the French and English forces. Why he shrank from that firm position last July and thereby led Germany to count so fatally on our neutrality I do not pretend to know: it suffices for my argument that we were able to hold the balance between France and Germany, but failed to hold it between Germany and Russia, and that it was the placing of Russian loans in France and England that brought Russia into our western affairs. It would have paid us ten times over to have made Russia a present of all we and France have lent her (indemnifying, of course, the holders of the stock through an addition to the income tax) rather than pay the price of a European war. But what is the use of crying for spilt milk? I am merely explaining why, when French money went to Russia, the French papers discovered that the Russians were a most interesting people and their Government—properly understood—a surprisingly Liberal Government; and why, when English money went to Russia, the English press suddenly developed leanings towards the Greek Church, and deplored the unofficial execution of Stolypin as deeply as it had rejoiced in the like fate of Bobrikoff. The upshot of it all is that western civilization is at present busy committing suicide by machinery, and importing hordes of Asiatics and Africans to help in the throat-cutting, not for the benefit of the silly capitalists, who are being ruined wholesale, but to break up the Austrian Empire for the benefit of Russia and the Slavs of eastern Europe, which may be a very desirable thing, but which could and should be done by the parties concerned among themselves, without tearing Belgium and Germany and France and England to pieces in the process.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Will you now at last believe, O stupid British, German, and French patriots, what the Socialists have been telling you for so many years: that your Union Jacks and tricolors and Imperial Eagles ("where the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered") are only toys to keep you amused, and that there are only two real flags in the world henceforth: the red flag of Democratic Socialism and the black flag of Capitalism, the flag of God and the flag of Mammon? What earthly or heavenly good is done when Tom Fool shoots Hans Narr? The plain fact is that if we leave our capital to be dealt with according to the selfishness of the private man he will send it where wages are low and workers enslaved and docile: that is, as many thousand miles as possible from the Trade Unions and Trade Union rates and parliamentary Labor Parties of civilization; and Germany, at his sordid behest, will plunge the world into war for the sake of disgracing herself with a few rubber plantations, poetically described by her orators and journalists as "a place in the sun." When you do what the Socialists tell you by keeping your capital jealously under national control and reserving your shrapnel for the wasters who not only shirk their share of the industrial service of their country, but intend that their children and children's children shall be idle wasters like themselves, you will find that not a farthing of our capital will go abroad as long as there is a British slum to be cleared and rebuilt, or a hungry, ragged, and ignorant British child to be fed, clothed, and educated.

But in the west I see no insuperable obstacle to a Treaty of Peace in the largest sense. This war has smoothed the way to it, if I may use the word smoothing to describe a process conducted with so little courtesy and so much shrapnel. Germany has now learned—and the lesson was apparently needed, obvious as it would have been to a sanely governed nation—that when it comes to shoving and shooting, Germany instantly loses all the advantages of her high civilization, because France and England, cultured or uncultured, can shove and shoot as well or better than she, whilst as to slashing and stabbing, their half barbarous Turco and Ghoorka slaves can cut the Prussian Guard to bits,

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

in spite of the unquestionable superiority of Wagner's music to theirs. Then take France. She does not dream that she could fight Germany and England single-handed. And England could not fight France and Germany without a sacrifice as ruinous as it would be senseless. We therefore have the necessary primary conditions for a League of Peace between the three countries; for if one of them break it, the other two can make her sorry, under which circumstances she will probably not break it. The present war, if it end in the reconquest of Alsace and Lorraine by the French, will make such a League much more stable; not that France can acquire by mere conquest any right to hold either province against its will (which could be ascertained by plebiscite), but because the honors of war as between France and Germany would then be easy, France having regained her laurels and taught Germany to respect her, without obliterating the record of Germany's triumph in 1870. And if the war should further result in the political reconstruction of the German Empire as a democratic Commonwealth, and the conquest by the English people of democratic control of English foreign policy, the combination would be immensely eased and strengthened, besides being brought into harmony with American public feeling, which is important to the security and prestige of the League.

Already the war has greatly added to the value of one of the factors upon which the League of Peace will depend. The smaller States: Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian Powers, would have joined it any time these forty years, had it existed, for the sake of its protection, and thereby made the Protestant north of Mr Houston Chamberlain's dream as much a reality as any such dream is ever likely to be. But after the fight put up by Belgium the other day, the small States will be able to come in with the certainty of being treated with considerable respect as military factors; for Belgium can now claim to have saved Europe single-handed. Germany has been very unpleasantly reminded of the fact that though a big man may be able to beat a little one, yet if the little one fights for all he is worth he may leave the victor very sorry he broke the peace. Even as between

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

the big Powers, victory has not, as far as the fighting has yet gone, been always with the biggest battalions. With a couple of million less men, the Kaiser might have taken more care of them and made a better job of it.

At the same time I hold no brief for small States as such, and most vehemently deny that we are in any way bound to knight errantry on their behalf as against big ones. They are mostly either incorrigibly bellicose themselves, like Montenegro, or standing temptations to the big Powers, like Bosnia and Herzegovina. They multiply frontiers, which are nuisances, and languages, which have made confusion since the building of Babel. The striking contrast between the United States of North America and the disunited States of South America in this respect is, from the Pacifist point of view, very much in favor of the northern unity. The only objection to large political units is that they make extremely dangerous autocracies. But as groups of federated democracies they are the best neighbors in the world. A federal democratic Russia would be as safe a colleague as America: a federal democratic Germany would be as pleasant company as Switzerland. Let us, I beg, hear no more of little States as British Dulcineas.

As to the special case of Belgium, its claims in the settlement are simple and indeed single. If we conclude a peace without clearing the Germans completely out of Belgium, we shall be either beaten or dishonored. And such indemnity as a money payment can effect for Belgium is due not only by Germany, but by Britain, France, and Russia as well. Belgium has been crushed between the Alliance and the *Entente*: it was these two menaces to the peace of Europe that produced Armageddon; and as Belgium's heroic resistance served the *Entente* against the Alliance, the obligation to make good the remediable damage is even more binding on the *Entente*.

But there is another and more pressing matter arising out of the conquest of Belgium.

As I write these lines the descent on our shores of an army of refugees from captured Antwerp and threatened Ostend has

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

forced the President of the Local Government Board to make a desperate appeal to all and sundry to form representative committees to deal with the prevention and relief of distress: in other words to save the refugees from starving to death. Now the Board of Trade had already drawn attention to a memorandum of the Local Government Board as to the propriety of providing employment for refugees. And instantly and inevitably the condition had to be laid down that if the Committees find employment for anyone, they shall refer the case to the local Labor Exchange in order that "any steps taken to assist refugees to find employment shall not be such as to endanger the employment of British workpeople." In other words, the starving Belgians have fled from the Germans only to compete for crusts with starving Englishmen. As long as there is an unemployed Englishman in the country—and there are a good many, especially in the cotton industry—how is it possible to give a job to a Belgian without depriving an Englishman of it? Why, instead of making impossible conditions, and helplessly asking private citizens to do something for pity's sake, will not the Government face the fact that the refugee question is simply an intensification of the normal unemployed question, the only difference being that we are accustomed to leave our own people to starve when they are common persons with whom the governing classes do not associate, whereas the Belgians have rendered us such a tremendous service in the war, and our statesmen have so loudly protested that the integrity of Belgium is dearer to England than her own heart's blood, that we cannot with any decency treat the destitute Belgians as if they were mere British riffraff. Yet when we attempt to provide for the Belgians by finding work for them the Board of Trade has to point out that by doing so we are taking the bread out of the mouths of our own people. Hence we arrive at the remarkable situation of starving Britons and Belgians looking hungrily through barbed wire fences at flourishing communities of jolly and well fed German prisoners of war (whose friendly hat wavings to me and my fellow passengers as I rush through Newbury Racecourse Station in the Great Western Express I

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

hereby acknowledge publicly with all possible good feeling). I therefore for the present strongly recommend all Belgians who have made up their minds to flee to England to pick up German uniforms on the battlefields and surrender to the British in the character of Uhlans. Their subsistence will then be secure until the war is over, as we dare not illtreat our prisoners lest the Germans should retaliate upon the British soldiers in their hands, even if we were all spiteful enough to desire to do it, as some of our baser sort have not been ashamed to propose.

But the women and children, and the too young and the too old, cannot resort to this expedient. And though theoretically our own unemployed could be dressed in British uniforms and sent abroad with instructions to take refuge in neutral territory and be "interned," or to surrender to the first Uhlan patrol they met, yet it would be difficult to reduce this theory to practice, though the possibility is worth mentioning as a reduction to absurdity of the situation. As a matter of common sense we should at once place all destitute Belgian refugees on the footing of prisoners of war, except that we need not post sentries to shoot them if they try to escape, nor surround them with barbed wire. Indeed these precautions are necessary in the case of the Germans rather to save their sense of honor whilst remaining here than to defeat any very strong longing on their part to return to the trenches.

In a reasonable state of society there would be another difference. The Belgians would offer to work so as not to be a burden to us; whilst the German prisoner would say—as he actually does, by the way—"No: I am not here by my own will: if you open the door I shall go home and take myself off your hands; so I am in no way bound to work for you." As it is, our Trade Unions are up in arms at the slightest hint of either Belgian or German labor being employed when there is no shortage of English labor!

All this exasperating anomaly and deadlock and breakdown would disappear if we had a proper system of provision for our own unemployed civilians (there are no unemployed soldiers:

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

we do not discharge them between the battles). The Belgians would have found an organization of unemployment ready for them, and would have been provided for with our own unemployed, not as refugees but simply as unemployed. How to do that need not be explained here. The problem was worked out by one of the hardest bits of thinking yet done in the Socialist movement, and set forth in the Minority Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and the Relief of Distress, 1909. Our helplessness in the present emergency shews how very unwise we were to shelve that report. Unluckily, what with the wounded vanity of the majority of the Commission, who had been played off the stage by Mrs Sidney Webb; the folly of the younger journalists of the advanced guard, who had just then rediscovered Herbert Spencer's mare's nest of "the servile State," and revolted with all the petulant anarchism of the literary profession against the ideal Interfering Female as typified in their heated imaginations by poor Mrs Sidney Webb, who became the Aunt Sally of our young artists in stale anti-bureaucratic invective; and, above all, the mulishly silent refusal of our governing classes to see why the unemployed should not be simply left to starve, as they had always been, nothing was done; and there is consequently no machinery ready for dealing with the refugees. That is why we must treat them for the moment simply as unguarded prisoners of war.

But if the problem of unemployment among our own people becomes acute, we shall have to fall back on the Minority Report proposals or else run the risk of a revolt against the war. We have already counted on the chances of that revolt hampering Germany, just as Germany counted on the chances of its hampering Russia. The notion that the working classes can stop a war by a general international strike is never mentioned during the first rally to the national flag at the outbreak of a war; but it is there all the time, ready to break out again if the supplies of food and glory run short. Its gravity lies in its impracticability. If it were practicable, every sane man would advocate it. As it is, it might easily mean that British troops would be coercing British strikers

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

at home when they should be fighting Potsdam abroad, thus producing a disastrous and detestable division of popular feeling in the face of the enemy.

Objections to the Western Pacifist settlement will come from several quarters, including the Pacifist quarters. Some of the best disposed parties will stumble over the old delusion of disarmament. They think it is the gun that matters. They are wrong: the gun matters very much when war breaks out; but what makes both war and the gun is the man behind them. And if that man really means the peace of the world to be kept, he will take care to have a gun to keep it with. The League of Peace must have a first-rate armament, or the League of War will very soon make mincemeat of it. The notion that the men of evil intent are to have all the weapons will not work. Theoretically, all our armaments should be pooled. But as we, the British Empire, will most certainly not pool our defences with anyone, and as we have not the very smallest intention of disarming, and will go on building gun for gun and ship for ship in step with even our dearest friends if we see the least risk of our being left in a position of inferiority, we cannot with any countenance demand that other Powers shall do what we will not do ourselves. Our business is not to disable ourselves or anyone else, but to organize a balance of military power against war, whether made by ourselves or any other Power; and this can be done only by a combination of armed and fanatical Pacifists of all nations, not by a crowd of non-combatants wielding deprecations, remonstrances, and Christmas cards.

How far it will be possible to take these national armaments out of national control remains to be seen. Already America, who is as deeply demoralized by Capitalism as we are, though much less tainted with Militarism now that Colonel Roosevelt has lost his front seat, has pledged herself to several European States not to go to war with them until the matter under dispute has been in the hands of an international tribunal for a year. Now there is no military force on earth, nor likely to be, strong enough to prevent America from treating these agreements as Germany

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

has just treated the 1839 Treaty guaranteeing the neutrality of Belgium. Therefore the Militarists declare that the agreements are not worth the scraps of paper they are written on. They always will footle in this way. They might as well say that because there are crimes which men can commit with legal impunity in spite of our haphazard criminal codes, men always do commit them. No doubt nations will do what it is to their interest to do. But because there is in every nation a set of noisy moral imbeciles who cannot see that nations have an overwhelming interest in creating and maintaining a tradition of international good faith, and honoring their promissory notes as scrupulously as the moral imbeciles pay their silly gambling debts and fight their foolish duels, we are not, I presume, going to discard every international guarantee except the howitzer. Why, the very Prussian Militarists themselves are reviling us for doing what their own Militarist preachers assumed as a matter of course that we should do: that is, attack Prussia without regard to the interests of European civilization when we caught her at a disadvantage between France and Russia. But we should have been ashamed to do that if she had not, by assuming that there was no such thing as shame (*alias* conscience), terrified herself into attacking France and Belgium, when, of course, we were immediately ashamed not to defend them. This idiotic ignoring of the highest energies of the human soul, without the strenuous pressure of which the fabric of civilization—German civilization perhaps most of all—could not hold together for a single day, should really be treated in the asylums of Europe, not on battlefields.

I conclude that we might all very well make a beginning by pledging ourselves as America has done to The Hague tribunal not to take up arms in any cause that has been less than a year under arbitration, and to treat any western Power refusing this pledge as an unpopular and suspicious member of the European club. To break such a pledge would be an act of brigandage; and the need for suppressing brigandage cannot be regarded as an open question.

It will be observed that I propose no guarantee of absolute security. Not being a sufferer from *delirium tremens* I can live

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

without it. Security is no doubt the Militarists' most seductive bait to catch the coward's vote. But their method makes security impossible. They undertook to secure the English in Egypt from an imaginary Islam rising by the Denshawai Horror, as a result of which nobody has ventured to suggest that we should trust the Egyptian army in this conflict, though India, having learnt from Mr Keir Hardie and Mr Ramsay Macdonald that there are really anti-Militarists in England who regard Indians as fellow creatures, is actually rallying to us against the Prussian Junkers, who are, in Indian eyes, indistinguishable from the Anglo-Indians who call Mr Keir Hardie and Mr. Ramsay Macdonald traitors, and whose panicstricken denial of even a decent pretence of justice in the sedition trials is particularly unfortunate just now. We must always take risks; and we should never trade on the terror of death, nor forget that this wretchedness of all the trades is none the less craven because it can so easily be gilt with romance and heroism and solemn national duty and patriotism and the like by persons whose superficial literary and oratorical talent covers an abyss of Godforsaken folly.

The one danger before us that nothing can avert but a general raising of human character through the deliberate cultivation and endowment of democratic virtue without consideration of property and class, is the danger created by inventing weapons capable of destroying civilization faster than we produce men who can be trusted to use them wisely. At present we are handling them like children. Now children are very pretty, very lovable, very affectionate creatures (sometimes); and a child can make nitro-glycerine or chloride of nitrogen as well as a man if it is taught to do so. We have sense enough not to teach it; but we do teach the grown-up children. We actually accompany that dangerous technical training with solemn moral lessons in which the most destructive use of these forces at the command of kings and capitalists is inculcated as heroism, patriotism, glory and all the rest of it. It is all very well to fire cannons at the Kaiser for doing this; but we do it ourselves. It is therefore undeniably possible that a diabolical rhythm may be set up in which civiliza-

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

tion will rise periodically to the point at which explosives powerful enough to destroy it are discovered, and will then be shattered and thrown back to a fresh start with a few starving and ruined survivors. H. G. Wells and Anatole France have prefigured that result in fiction; and I cannot deny the strength of its probability; for if England and Germany can find no better way of celebrating their arrival at the highest point of civilization yet attained than setting out to blow one another to fragments with fulminates, it would seem that the peace of the neutral States is the result, not of their being more civilized, but less heavily armed. And when we see that the effect of the enterprise is not to redouble civil vigilance and stimulate the most alert and jealous political criticism, but on the contrary to produce an assumption that every constitutional safeguard must be suspended until the war is over, and that every silly tyrannical expedient such as censorship of the press, martial law, and the like, will begin to work good instead of evil the moment men take to murdering one another, it must be admitted that the prospect is not too hopeful. Our only consolation is that civilization has survived very destructive wars before, mostly because they have produced effects not only unintended but violently objected to by the people who made them. In 1870, for instance, Napoleon III can hardly have intended his own overthrow and return to exile in England; nor did Bismarck aim at the restoration of French Republicanism and the formation of an Anglo-Franco-Russian alliance against Prussia. Several good things may come out of the present war if it leaves anybody alive to enjoy them.

And now, where in our society is the organ whose function it should be to keep us constantly in mind that, as Lassalle said, "the sword is never right," and to shudder with him at the fact that "the Lie is a European Power"? In no previous war have we struck that top note of keen irony, the closing of the Stock Exchange and not of the Church. The pagans were more logical: they closed the Temple of Peace when they drew the sword. We turn our Temples of Peace promptly into temples of war, and exhibit our parsons as the most pugnacious characters in the

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

community. I venture to affirm that the sense of scandal given by this is far deeper and more general than the Church thinks, especially among the working classes, who are apt either to take religion seriously or else to repudiate it and criticize it closely. When a bishop at the first shot abandons the worship of Christ and rallies his flock round the altar of Mars, he may be acting patriotically, necessarily, manfully, rightly; but that does not justify him in pretending that there has been no change, and that Christ is, in effect, Mars. The straightforward course, and the one that would serve the Church best in the long run, would be to close our professedly Christian Churches the moment war is declared by us, and reopen them only on the signing of the treaty of peace. No doubt to many of us the privation thus imposed would be far worse than the privation of small change, of horses and motor cars, of express trains, and all the other prosaic inconveniences of war. But would it be worse than the privation of faith, and the horror of the soul, wrought by the spectacle of nations praying to their common Father to assist them in sabring and bayoneting and blowing one another to pieces with explosives that are also corrosives, and of the Church organizing this monstrous paradox instead of protesting against it? Would it make less atheists or more? Atheism is not a simple homogeneous phenomenon. There is the youthful atheism with which every able modern mind begins: an atheism that clears the soul of superstitions and terrors and servilities and base compliances and hypocrisies, and lets in the light of heaven. And there is the atheism of despair and pessimism: the sullen cry with which so many of us at this moment, looking on blinded deafened maimed wrecks that were once ablebodied admirable lovable men, and on priests blessing war, and newspapers and statesmen and exempt old men hounding young men on to it, are saying "I know now there is no God." What has the Church in its present attitude to set against this crushed acceptance of darkness except the quaint but awful fact that there are cruder people on whom horrifying calamities have just the opposite effect, because they seem the work of some power so overwhelming in its malignity

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

that it must be worshipped because it is mighty? Let the Church beware how it plays to that gallery. If all the Churches of Europe closed their doors until the drums ceased rolling they would act as a most powerful reminder that though the glory of war is a famous and ancient glory, it is not the final glory of God.

But as I know quite well that the Churches are not going to do anything of the kind, I must not close on a note which might to some readers imply that I hope, as some highly respected friends of mine do, to build a pacific civilization on the ruins of the vast ecclesiastical organizations which have never yet been able to utter the truth, because they have had to speak to the poor according to their ignorance and credulity, and to the rich according to their power. When I read that the icon of the Russian peasant is a religious force that will prevail over the materialism of Helmholtz and Haeckel, I have to contain myself as best I can in the face of an assumption by a modern educated European which implies that the Irish peasants who tied scraps of rag to the trees over their holy wells and paid for masses to shorten the stay of their dead relatives in purgatory, were more enlightened than their countryman Tyndall, the Lucretian materialist, and to ask whether the Russian peasant may not find his religious opinions somewhat neutralized by his alliance with the countries of Paul Bert and Combes, of Darwin and Almroth Wright. If we are to keep up any decent show of talking sense on this point we must begin by recognizing that the lines of battle in this war cut right across all the political and sectarian lines in Europe, except the line between our Socialist future and our Commercialist past. Materialist France, metaphysical Germany, muddleheaded England, Byzantine Russia may form what military combinations they please: the one thing they cannot form is a Crusade; and all attempts to represent this war as anything higher or more significant philosophically or politically or religiously for our Junkers and our Tommies than a quite simple primitive contest of the pugnacity that bullies and the pugnacity that will not be bullied are foredoomed to the derision of history. However far-reaching the consequences of the war may be, we in England are

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

fighting to shew the Prussians that they shall not trample on us nor on our neighbors if we can help it, and that if they are fools enough to make fighting efficiency the test of civilization, we can play that game as destructively as they. That is simple, and the truth, and by far the jolliest and most inspiring ground to recruit on. It stirs the blood and stiffens the back as effectively and quickly as hypocrisy and cant and humbug sour and trouble and discourage. But it will not carry us farther than the end of the fight. We cannot go on fighting for ever, or even for very long, whatever Lord Kitchener may think; and win, lose, or tie, the parties, when the fight is over, must fall back on their civil wisdom and political foresight for a settlement of the terms on which we are to live happily together ever after. The practicable conditions of a stable comity of nations cannot be established by the bayonet, which settles nothing but the hash of those who rely on it. They are to be found, as I have already explained, in the substitution for our present Militarist kingdoms of a system of democratic units delimited by community of language, religion, and habit; grouped in federations of united States when their extent makes them politically unwieldy; and held against war by the bond of international Socialism, the only ground upon which the identity of interest between all workers never becomes obscured.

By far the greatest calamity wrought by the war has been the death of Jaurès, who was worth more to France and to Europe than ten army corps and a hundred archdukes. I once proposed a press law that might have saved him. It was that every article printed in a newspaper should bear not only the name and address of the writer, but the sum paid him for the contribution. If the wretched dupe who assassinated Jaurès had known that the trashy articles on the Three Years Law he had been reading were not the voice of France in peril, but the ignorant scribbling of some poor devil at his wits' end to earn three francs, he would hardly have thrown away his own life to take that of the greatest statesman his country has produced since Mirabeau. It is hardly too much to say that this ghastly murder and the appalling war that

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

almost eclipsed its horror, is the revenge of the sweated journalist on a society so silly that though it will not allow a man to stuff its teeth without ascertained qualifications for the task, it allows anyone, no matter how poor, how ignorant, how untrained, how imbecile, to stuff its brains without even taking the trouble to ask his name. When we interfere with him and his sweaters at all, we interfere by way of appointing a censorship to prevent him from telling, not lies, however mischievous and dangerous to our own people abroad, but the truth. To be a liar and a brewer of bad blood is to be a privileged person under our censorship, which, so far, has proceeded by no discoverable rule except that of concealing from us everything that the Germans must know lest the Germans should find it out.

Socialism has lost its leader on the Continent; but it is solid and representative on the main point: it loathes war; and it sees clearly that war is always waged by working men who have no quarrel, but on the contrary a supreme common interest. It steadily resists the dangerous export of capital by pressing the need for uncommercial employment of capital at home: the only practicable alternative. It knows that war, on its romantic side, is "the sport of kings"; and it concludes that we had better get rid of kings unless they can kill their tedium with more democratic amusements. It notes the fact that though the newspapers shout at us that these battles on fronts a hundred miles long, where the slain outnumber the total forces engaged in older campaigns, are the greatest battles known to history, such machine-carnages bore us so horribly that we are ashamed of our ingratitude to our soldiers in not being able to feel about them as about comparatively trumpery scraps like Waterloo or even Inkerman and Balaclava. It never forgets that as long as higher education, culture, foreign travel, knowledge of the world: in short, the qualification for comprehension of foreign affairs and intelligent voting, is confined to one small class, leaving the masses in poverty, narrowness, and ignorance, and being itself artificially cut off at their expense from the salutary pressure of the common burden which alone keeps men unspoilt and sane, so

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

long will that small class be forced to obtain the support of the masses for its wars by flattering proclamations of the national virtues and indignant denunciations of the villainies of the enemy, with, if necessary, a stiffening of deliberate falsehood and a strenuous persecution of any attempt at inconvenient truthtelling. Here there is no question of the Junker being a monster. You must rule ignoramus according to their ignorance. The priest must work bogus miracles for them; the man of science must offer them magical cures and prophylactics; the barrister must win their verdict by sophistries, false pathos, and appeals to their prejudices; the army and navy must dazzle them with pageants and bands and thundering salvos and romantic tales; the king must cut himself off from humanity and become an idol. There is no escape whilst such classes exist. Mahomet, the boldest prophet that ever threw down the gage of the singleness and supremacy of God to a fierce tribe of warriors who worshipped stones as devotedly as we worship dukes and millionaires, could not govern them by religious truth, and was forced to fall back on revolting descriptions of hell and the day of judgment, invented by him for the purpose. What else could he do if his people were not to be abandoned to their own destruction? If it is an axiom of diplomacy that the people must not be told the truth, that is not in the least because, for example, Sir Edward Grey has a personal taste for mendacity: it is a necessity imposed by the fact that the people are incapable of the truth. In the end, lying becomes a reflex action with diplomats; and we cannot even issue a penny bluebook without beginning it with the quite unprovoked statement that "no crime has ever aroused deeper or more general horror throughout Europe" than the assassination of the Archduke. The real tragedy was that the violent death of a fellow creature should have aroused so little.

This state of things would be bad enough if the governing classes really sought the welfare of the governed, and were deceiving them for their own good. But they are doing nothing of the sort. They are using their power secondarily, no doubt, to uphold the country in which they have so powerful and comfort-

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

able a position; but primarily their object is to maintain that position by the organized legal robbery of the poor; and to that end they would join hands with the German Junkers as against the working class in Germany and England as readily as Bismarck joined hands with Thiers to suppress the Commune of Paris. And even if this were not so, nothing would persuade the working classes that those who sweat them ruthlessly in commercial enterprise are any more considerate in public affairs, especially when there is any question of war, by which much money can be made for rich people who deal in the things most wanted and most highly paid for in war time: to wit, armaments and money. The direct interest of our military caste in war accounts for a good deal; but at least it involves personal risk and hardship and bereavement to the members of that caste. But the capitalist who has shares in explosives and cannons and soldiers' boots runs no risk and suffers no hardship; whilst as to the investor pure and simple, all that happens to him is that he finds the unearned income obtainable on Government security larger than ever. Victory to the capitalists of Europe means that they can not only impose on the enemy a huge indemnity, but lend him the money to pay it with whilst the working classes produce and pay both principal and interest.

As long as we have that state of things, we shall have wars and secret and mendacious diplomacy. And this is one of many overwhelming reasons for building the State on equality of income, because without it equality of status and general culture is impossible. Democracy without equality is a delusion more dangerous than frank oligarchy and autocracy. And without Democracy there is no hope of peace, no chance of persuading ourselves that the sacredness of civilization will protect it any more than the sacredness of the cathedral of Rheims has protected it, not against Huns and Vandals, but against educated German gentlemen.

Commercial wage-slaves can never reproduce that wonderful company of sculptured figures that made Rheims unlike any other place in the world; and if they are now destroyed, or shortly about to be, it does not console me that we still have—perhaps

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

for a few days longer only—the magical stained glass of Chartres and the choir of Beauvais. We tell ourselves that the poor French people must feel as we should feel if we had lost Westminster Abbey. Rheims was worth ten Westminster Abbeys; and where it has gone the others may just as easily go too. Let us not sneer at the German pretension to culture: let us face the fact that the Germans are just as cultured as we are (to say the least) and that war has nevertheless driven them to do these things as irresistibly as it will drive us to do similar things tomorrow if we find ourselves attacking a town in which the highest point from which our positions can be spotted by an observer with a field glass in one hand and a telephone in the other is the towering roof of the cathedral. Also let us be careful how we boast of our love of medieval art to people who well know, from the protests of Ruskin and Morris, that in times of peace we have done things no less mischievous and irreparable for no better reason than that the Mayor's brother or the Dean's uncle-in-law was a builder in search of a "restoration" job. If Rheims cathedral were taken from the Church tomorrow and given to an English or French joint stock company, everything transportable in it would presently be sold to American collectors, and the site cleared and let out in building sites. That is the way to make it "pay" commercially.

But our problem is how to make Commercialism itself bankrupt. We must beat Germany, not because the Militarist hallucination and our irresolution forced Germany to make this war, so desperate for her, at a moment so unfavorable to herself, but because she has made herself the exponent and champion in the modern world of the doctrine that military force is the basis and foundation of national greatness, and military conquest the method by which the nation of the highest culture can impose that culture on its neighbors. Now the reason I have permitted myself to call General Von Bernhardi a madman is that he lays down quite accurately the conditions of this military supremacy without perceiving that what he is achieving is a *reductio ad absurdum*. For he declares as a theorist what Napoleon found in practice, that you can maintain the Militarist hold over the im-

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

aginations of the people only by feeding them with continual glory. You must go from success to success: the moment you fail you are lost; for you have staked everything on your power to conquer, for the sake of which the people have submitted to your tyranny and endured the sufferings and paid the cost your military operations entailed. Napoleon conquered and conquered and conquered; and yet, when he had won more battles than the maddest Prussian can ever hope for, he had to go on fighting just as if he had never won anything at all. After exhausting the possible he had to attempt the impossible and go to Moscow. He failed; and from that moment he had better have been a Philadelphia Quaker than the victor of Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena, and Wagram. Within a short breathing time after that morning when he stood outside Leipsic, whistling *Malbrook s'en va-t-en guerre* whilst his flying army gasped its last in the river or fled under a hail of bullets from enemies commanded by generals without a tenth of his ability or prestige, we find him disguised as a postillion, cowering abjectly behind the door of a carriage whilst the French people whom he had crammed with glory for quarter of a century were seeking him to tear him limb from limb. His success had made him the enemy of every country except France: his failure made him the enemy of the human race. And that was why Europe rose up finally and smashed him, although the English Government which profited by that operation oppressed the English people for thirty years afterwards more sordidly than Napoleon would have oppressed them, and its Allies replaced him on the throne of France by an effete tyrant not worthy to unlace his shoe latchet. Nothing can finally redeem Militarism. When even genius itself takes that path its end is still destruction. When mere uppishness takes it the end is not changed, though it may be reached more precipitately and disastrously.

Prussia has talked of that path for many years as the one down which its destiny leads it. Its ruler, with the kid gloves he called mailed fists and the high class tailoring he called shining armor, did much of the talking, though he is in practice a most peaceful

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

teetotaller, as many men with their imaginations full of the romance of war are. He had a hereditary craze for playing at soldiers; and he was and is a naïve suburban snob, as the son of The Englishwoman would naturally be, talking about "the Hohenzollerns" exactly as my father's people in Dublin used to talk about "the Shaws." His stage walk, familiar through the cinematograph, is the delight of romantic boys, and betrays his own boyish love of the *Paradeschritt*. It is frightful to think of the powers which Europe, in its own snobbery, left in the hands of this Peter Pan; and appalling as the results of that criminal levity have been, yet, being by no means free from his romantic follies myself, I do not feel harshly towards Peter, who, after all, kept the peace for over twenty-six years. In the end his talk and his games of soldiers in preparation for a toy conquest of the world frightened his neighbors into a league against him; and that league has now caught him in just such a trap as his strategists were laying for his neighbors. We please ourselves by pretending that he did not try to extricate himself, and forced the war on us; but that is not true. When he realized his peril he tried hard enough; but when he saw that it was no use he accepted the situation and dashed at his enemies with an infatuate courage not unworthy of the Hohenzollern tradition. Blinded as he was by the false ideals of his class, it was the best thing he could do; for there is always a chance for a brave and resolute warrior, even when his back is not to the wall but to the Russians.

That means that we have to conquer him and not to revile him and strike moral attitudes. His victory over British and French Democracy would be the victory of Militarism over civilization: it would literally shut the gates of mercy on mankind. Leave it to our official fools and governesses to lecture the Kaiser, and to let loose Turcos and Ghoorkas on him: a dangerous precedent. Let Thomas Atkins, Patrick Murphy, Sandy McAlister, and Pitou Dupont fight him under what leadership they can get, until honor is satisfied, simply because if St George does not slay the dragon the world will be, as a friend of mine said of Europe the other day, "no place for a gentleman."

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

RECAPITULATION

1. The war should be pushed vigorously, not with a view to a final crushing of the German army between the Anglo-French combination and the Russian millions, but to the establishment of a decisive military superiority by the Anglo-French combination alone. A victory unattainable without Russian aid would be a defeat for Western European Liberalism: Germany would be beaten not by us but by a Militarist autocracy worse than her own. By sacrificing Prussian Poland and the Slav portions of the Austrian Empire Germany and Austria could satisfy Russia, and merge Austria and Germany into a single German State, which would then dominate France and England, having ascertained that they could not conquer her without Russia's aid. We may fairly allow Russia to conquer Austria if she can: that is her natural part of the job. But if we two cannot without Russian help beat Potsdam, or at least hold her up in such a stalemate as will make it clear that it is impossible for her to subjugate us, then we shall simply have to "give Germany best" and depend on an alliance with America for our place in the sun.

2. We cannot smash or disable Germany, however completely we may defeat her, because we can do that only by killing her women; and it is trifling to pretend that we are capable of any such villainy. Even to embarrass her financially by looting her would recoil on ourselves, as she is one of our commercial customers and one of our most frequently visited neighbors. We must, if we can, drive her from Belgium without compromise. France may drive her from Alsace and Lorraine. Russia may drive her from Poland. She knew when she opened fire that these were the stakes in the game; and we are bound to support France and Russia until they are won or lost, unless a stalemate reduces the whole method of warfare to absurdity. Austria, too, knew that the Slav part of her empire was at stake. By winning these stakes the Allies will wake the Kaiser from his dream of a Holy Teuton Empire with Prussia as the Head of its Church, and teach him to respect us; but that once done, we must not allow our

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

camp followers to undo it all again by spiteful humiliations and exactions which could not seriously cripple Germany, and would make bad blood between us for a whole generation, to our own great inconvenience, unhappiness, disgrace, and loss. We and France have to live with Germany after the war; and the sooner we make up our mind to do it generously, the better. The word after the fight must be *sans rancune*; for without peace between France, Germany, and England, there can be no peace in the world.

3. War, as a school of character and a nurse of virtue, must be formally shut up and discharged by all the belligerents when this war is over. It is quite true that ill-bred and swinish nations can be roused to a serious consideration of their position and their destiny only by earthquakes, pestilences, famines, comets' tails, Titanic shipwrecks, and devastating wars, just as it is true that African chiefs cannot make themselves respected unless they bury virgins alive beneath the doorposts of their hut-palaces, and Tartar Khans find that the exhibition of a pyramid of chopped-off heads is a short way to impress their subjects with a convenient conception of their divine right to rule. Ivan the Terrible did undoubtedly make his subjects feel very serious indeed; and stupid people are apt to believe that this sort of terror-stiffened seriousness is virtue. It is not. Any person who should set-to deliberately to contrive artificial earthquakes, scuttle liners, and start epidemics with a view to the moral elevation of his countrymen, would very soon find himself in the dock. Those who plan wars with the same object should be removed with equal firmness to Hanwell or Bethlehem Hospital. A nation so degraded as to be capable of responding to no higher stimulus than that of horror had better be exterminated, by Prussian war lords or anyone else foolish enough to waste powder on them instead of leaving them to perish of their own worthlessness.

4. Neither England nor Germany must claim any moral superiority in the negotiations. Both were engaged for years in a race for armaments. Both indulged and still indulge in literary and oratorical provocation. Both claimed to be "an Imperial race"

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

ruling other races by divine right. Both shewed high social and political consideration to parties and individuals who openly said that the war had to come. Both formed alliances to reinforce them for that war. The case against Germany for violating the neutrality of Belgium is of no moral value to England because (*a*) England has allowed the violation of the Treaty of Paris by Russia (violation of the neutrality of the Black Sea and closing of the free port of Batoum), and the high-handed and scandalous violation of the Treaty of Berlin by Austria (seizure of Bosnia and Herzegovina), without resorting to arms or remedying the aggression in any other way; (*b*) because we have fully admitted that we should have gone to war in defence of France in any case, whether the Germans came through Belgium or not, and refused to give the German ambassador any assurance that we should remain neutral if the Germans sacrificed the military advantage of attacking through Belgium for the sake of avoiding a war with us; (*c*) that the apparent moral superiority of the pledge given by France and England to respect Belgian neutrality is illusory in face of the facts that France and England stood to gain enormously, and the Germans to lose correspondingly, by confining the attack on France to the heavily fortified Franco-German frontier, and that as France and England knew they would be invited by the Belgians to enter Belgium if the Germans invaded it, the neutrality of Belgium had, as far as they were concerned, no real existence; (*d*) that as all treaties are valid only *rebus sic stantibus*, and the state of things which existed at the date of the Treaty of London (1839) had changed so much since then (Belgium is no longer menaced by France, at whom the treaty was aimed, and has acquired important colonies, for instance) that in 1870 Gladstone could not depend on it, and resorted to a special temporary treaty not now in force, the technical validity of the 1839 treaty is extremely doubtful; (*e*) that even if it be valid its breach is not a *casus belli* unless the parties for reasons of their own choose to make it so; and (*f*) that the German national peril pleaded by the Imperial Chancellor in his Peer Gynt speech (the *durchhauen* one), when he rashly but frankly threw away the strong technical case just

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

stated and admitted a breach of international law, was so great according to received Militarist ideas in view of the Russian mobilization, that it is impossible for us or any other Militarist-ridden Power to feel sure ourselves, much less to convince others, that we should have been any more scrupulous in the like extremity.

It must be added that nothing can extenuate the enormity of the brute fact that an innocent country has been horribly devastated because her guilty neighbors formed two explosive combinations against one another instead of establishing the peace of Europe; but that is an offence against a higher law than any recorded on diplomatic scraps of paper; and when it comes to judgment, the outraged conscience of humanity will not have much patience with the naughty child's plea, "He began it."

5. Militarism must not be treated as a disease peculiar to Prussia. It is rampant in England; and in France it has led to the assassination of her greatest statesman. If the upshot of the war is to be regarded and acted upon simply as a defeat of German Militarism by Anglo-French Militarism, then the war will not only have wrought its own immediate evils of destruction and demoralization, but will extinguish the last hope that we have risen above the "dragons of the prime that tare each other in their slime." We have all been equally guilty in the past. It has been steadily assumed for years that the Militarist party is the gentlemanly party. Its opponents have been ridiculed and prosecuted in England; hanged, flogged or exiled in Russia; and imprisoned in France: they have been called traitors, cads, cranks, and so forth: they have been imprisoned for "bad taste" and for sedition whilst the most virulent seditious agitation against Democracy and the most mutinous military escapades in the commissioned ranks have been tolerated obsequiously, until finally the practical shelving of Liberal Constitutionalism has provoked both in France and England a popular agitation of serious volume for the supersession of parliament by some sort of direct action by the people, called Syndicalism. In short, Militarism, which is nothing but State Anarchism, has been carried to such a pitch that it has been imi-

COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR

tated and countered by a movement of popular Anarchism, and has exploded in a European war because the Commercialist Governments of Europe had no faith in the effective guidance of any modern State by higher considerations than Lord Roberts's "will to conquer," the weight of the Kaiser's mailed fist, and the interest of the Bourses and Stock Exchanges. Unless we are all prepared to fight Militarism at home as well as abroad, the cessation of hostilities will last only until the belligerents have recovered from their exhaustion.

6. It had better be admitted on our side that as to the conduct of the war there is no trustworthy evidence that the Germans have committed any worse or other atrocities than those which are admitted to be inevitable in war or accepted as part of military usage by the Allies. By "making examples" of towns, and seizing irresponsible citizens as hostages and shooting them for the acts of armed civilians over whom they could exercise no possible control, the Germans have certainly pushed these usages to a point of Terrorism which is hardly distinguishable from the deliberate murder of non-combatants; but as the Allies have not renounced such usages, nor ceased to employ them ruthlessly in their dealings with the hill tribes and fellahs and Arabs with whom they themselves have to deal (to say nothing of the notorious domestic Terrorism of the Russian Government), they cannot claim superior humanity. It is therefore waste of time for the pot to call the kettle black. Our outcry against the Germans for sowing the North Sea with mines was followed too closely by the laying of a mine field there by ourselves to be revived without flagrant Pharisaism. The case of Rheims cathedral also fell to the ground as completely as a good deal of the building itself when it was stated that the French had placed a post of observation on the roof. Whether they did or not, all military experts were aware that an officer neglecting to avail himself of the cathedral roof in this way, or an opposing officer hesitating to fire on the cathedral so used, would have been court-martialled in any of the armies engaged. The injury to the cathedral must therefore be suffered as a strong hint from Providence that though we can have glorious

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

wars or glorious cathedrals we cannot have both.

7. To sum up, we must remember that if this war does not make an end of war in the west, our allies of today may be our enemies of tomorrow as they are of yesterday, and our enemies of today our allies of tomorrow as they are of yesterday; so that if we aim merely at a fresh balance of military power, we are as likely as not to negotiate our own destruction. We must use the war to give the *coup de grâce* to medieval diplomacy, medieval autocracy, and anarchic export of capital, and make its conclusion convince the world that Democracy is invincible, and Militarism a rusty sword that breaks in the hand. We must free our soldiers, and give them homes worth fighting for. And we must, as the old phrase goes, discard the filthy rags of our righteousness, and fight like men with everything, even a good name, to win, inspiring and encouraging ourselves with definite noble purposes (abstract nobility butters no parsnips) to face whatever may be the price of proving that war cannot conquer us, and that he who dares not appeal to our conscience has nothing to hope from our terrors.

CHAPTER III

THE HARD CASE OF BELGIUM

COMMON SENSE grew so monstrously in the public patriotic imagination as its actual text was forgotten that those who read it now with any recollection of its reputation will be surprised and possibly disappointed to find in it nothing of the passionate pro-Germanism, Defeatism, and Pacifism which it came to be supposed to contain. It was not badly received at first: in fact its relative sanity must have been an enormous relief after the surfeit of raving. But it had a shocking effect on the most amiable and innocent of our people. In spite of all possible glorifications and concealments war is so horrible that only by enormous overdoses of selfrighteousness and moral indignation can such decent souls be drugged and maddened into enduring it. They must be made to believe that a savage attack has been made on a peaceful people by inhuman foreign monsters, whose daily occupation is the committal of revolting atrocities and obscenities. Their clamor for impassioned statements of England's case in these terms, and for evidence, however absurd, of the atrocities and obscenities, was like the clamor of an agonizingly wounded combatant for morphia. The cruellest use I have ever had to make of my pen was to treat the Balance of Power diplomacy of which the war was an incident as so completely unmoral and Machiavellian that such expressions as war guilt had no place nor meaning in it; that it was a game at which we had outwitted the Germans instead of the Germans cheating us; that a Junker was not a fiend in a spiked helmet but the German equivalent of an English country gentleman; and so on: all of which, though the conquistadores despised the amiable people as silly sentimentalists for being shocked by it, was so unbearable that if the amiable people had not been too amiable to lynch me, I should have been lynched. I bore no malice; for the amiable people were sound at heart, and had my entire sympathy fundamentally. Balance of Power Diplomacy and war are villainous; and all that the amiable people lacked was the knowledge

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

and strength of mind to face that fact and extirpate both instead of masking them as moral and patriotic duties and becoming the admiring accomplices of the diplomatists. But I could not indulge these innocents: they were being catered for by our journalists and war orators to the most extravagant excess with utter recklessness as to the reaction of their statements on foreign, and especially on American opinion; and my business, as one of the few writers whose words cross frontiers, was to clear our case of false claims and thus anticipate and disarm their inevitable exposure by the enemy.

I was specially concerned about the case of Belgium. The violation of Belgian neutrality by the Germans was the mainstay of our righteousness; and we played it off on America for much more than it was worth. I guessed that when the German account of our dealings with Belgium reached the United States, backed with an array of facsimiles of secret diplomatic documents discovered by them in Brussels, it would be found that our own treatment of Belgium was as little compatible with neutrality as the German invasion. We had told her that in the event of her being invaded we should send troops into Belgium with or without her consent, and that she must resist instead of taking the only reasonable course available for a small State threatened by an overwhelmingly big one, and actually taken by Greece when we without a second thought violated her neutrality by seizing certain Greek islands which happened to be important to us not only strategically but in one glaring case because the supply of a mineral indispensable to our military efficiency was at stake: that is, to submit under protest to superior force. We had also molested peaceful America by seizing at Gibraltar the cargoes of American ships entering the Mediterranean to trade with as-yet-neutral Italy, lest they should find their way through Italy to Germany. In short, we had prepared for the war by forcing on Belgium a secret military arrangement against Germany; and when the war began we had at once violated the neutrality of Greece by occupying her territory, and of the United States and Italy by stopping their overseas trade and seizing their merchandise without com-

THE HARD CASE OF BELGIUM

pensation. All this was quite in order as a recognized part of the game of war and its diplomacy, which our enemies were playing as unscrupulously as ourselves; but our amiable simpletons could not stomach it, because they could reconcile themselves to the war only by giving themselves moral airs at the expense of the Germans. Now it was clear that when the facts became public abroad (the Germans would presently see to that), such airs, though they might still impose on our innocents at home, would only irritate America, and supply the journalists of the rest of the neutral world with a fresh variation on the well worn theme of Perfidious Albion. Accordingly, I set to work to clean the slate in this respect not only by assuring Senator Beveridge, in a reported conversation, that there was nothing in the Belgian pretext, but by publishing an Open Letter to President Wilson inviting him to intervene on Belgium's account without committing himself to any demonstration of sympathy with us, and arguing the point fiercely at home in a series of letters to the Press, all intended for quotation abroad.

The controversy proved superfluous after all; for the foreign trade department at the Admiralty, in the sensible hands of Sir Richard Webb, consented to pay for the confiscated cargoes; the support of the American Jews was purchased by Lord Balfour at the price of Jerusalem (Zion); and the sinking of the Lusitania by a German submarine not only removed the danger of America coming into the war on the German side, but practically forced her in on our side. My officiousness in the matter was therefore entirely wasted; and I reproduce a few sample documents here, after considerable hesitation, partly as a contribution to the history of the controversies which accompanied the gunfire, with no better moral than that in war the pen can never keep pace with the sword, and partly because, in exploding the figment of Belgian neutrality, I was carried on to the conclusion that all neutrality in war is impossible. The United States, after a presidential election won by Woodrow Wilson as the statesman who had kept his country out of the war, had to plunge his country into it. Italy could not keep out. Bulgaria and Roumania were forced into it.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

The frontiers of neutral Greece were no more respected than the frontiers of Belgium. All this is open to the sky; but we are still apt to assume that, for instance, Holland and Sweden kept out of the war. They were quite unable to do so. They were not invaded by armed troops, nor fired upon and slaughtered; but anyone who concludes from this that they were not affected and in some respects seriously injured by the war has never talked about it to a Dutch merchant or a Swede. The more I thought about it the plainer it became to me that when we were all talking passionately about neutrality we were talking impracticable nonsense, and had better have spared our breath to cool our rationed porridge.

I shall begin with a sort of prose poem entitled *The Last Spring of the Old Lion*, which rather pleased the romantic patriots, and made the Pacifists-at-any-price gasp.

THE LAST SPRING OF THE OLD LION

(*From The New Statesman of the 12th December 1914*)

What is the English press coming to when it can find nothing in the French Yellow Book but the single morsel of garbage that disgraces it? In the heat and scare of the first outbreak of the war there was some excuse for swallowing that general order of the Kaiser in which, finding the German language too inexpressive, he exhorted his army to take no notice of the French and Russian millions, but to concentrate their wrath on General French's contemptible little army. Yet that journalistic effort was plausible compared to the "official and secret report from a trustworthy source" which M. Étienne sent to M. Jonnart on April 2, 1913. M. Jonnart's reception of it is not chronicled. I make haste to announce that I am not taken in, and that nothing more on that subject is to be feared by readers of this article.

From the authentic part of this Yellow Book there emerges a picture so stirring that it is amazing to me that no Englishman has yet rescued it from its wrappings of official correspondence.

THE HARD CASE OF BELGIUM

For in it you see the old British lion, the lion of Blenheim, the lion of Trafalgar, the lion of Waterloo, making his last and most terrible and triumphant spring. You see him with his old craft and his old courage and strength unimpaired, with his old amazing luck, his old singleness of aim, his old deep-lying and subtle instinct that does better without great men at a pinch than his enemies do with them.

For centuries now the lion has held to his one idea, that none shall be greater than England on the land, and none as great on the sea. To him it has been nothing whether a rival to England was better or worse than England. When Waterloo was won, Byron said “I’m damned sorry”; and humanitarians and libertarians looked aghast at the re-establishment of the Inquisition and the restoration of an effete and mischievous dynasty by English arms on the ruins of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. Little recked the lion of that: England’s rival was in the dust; England was mistress of the seas; England’s general (what matter that he was an Irishman?) was master of Europe, with its kings whispering in his presence like frightened schoolboys. England right or wrong, England complete with her own native corruptions and oppressions no less than her own native greatness and glory, had risen all English from the conflict and held the balance of power in her hand. For a hundred years after that no Englishman knew what it was to turn pale at the possibility of an invasion. For more than two generations of Englishmen the lion lay and basked and smelt no foe that a pat of his paw could not dispose of.

Then a rival arose again. Battles more terrible than Waterloo were fought against the same foe; but it was not England that won them. The lion rose and began to watch. The old instinct stirred in him. He heard the distant song “Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles”; and something in him said “Never that whilst I live.” The rival built a warship; built another warship and yet another; openly challenged the sovereignty of the sea. That was the end. From that moment it was only a question of when to spring. For a lion with that one idea at heart, with that necessity deep in his very bowels, must be crafty: he must win

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

at all hazards, no matter how long he crouches before the right moment comes.

You see it coming in the Yellow Book. Germany with Austria and Russia with France stalk each other, finger on trigger, France avoiding the fight, Russia gradually arming herself and training herself for it, Austria speculating on it, all, even Austria, afraid of the lion's rival, Germany. France, always manœuvring for peace (being outnumbered), at last finds that Germany, defiant of her and of Russia, contemptuously sure that she can crush the one with her right hand and the other with her left, yet fears the lion, and well knows that if he comes to the aid of France and Russia, the odds will be too terrible even for the victors of Sedan. France sounds the lion on the subject: the lion, grim and cautious, does not object to his naval and military commanders talking to the commanders of France and discussing what might happen and how in that case things might be arranged. France suddenly bullies Germany: tells her to clear out of Morocco and clear out sharp. Germany looks at the lion and sees him with quivering tail about to spring. The odds are too great: with mortification tearing her heart Germany clears out, successfully bullied for the first time since the rise of her star.

The lion is balked. Another few years of waiting, and the British taxpayer may tire of keeping ahead of that growing fleet. The old instinct whispers, "Now, now, before the rival is too strong." But there are lambs in England as well as lions; and of these the lion must take account: if the rival will not fight, it is not easy to attack him. And Germany will not fight unless the lion can be detached from France and Russia, yet is sick with the humiliation of that bullying, and knows that nothing but downing the bullies can restore her prestige and heal her wounded pride. But she must swallow her spleen; for at every threat France points to the lion and saves the peace France alone really desires. Every time Germany is humiliated the lion is balked, Austria's Balkan speculation is postponed, and Russia does not quite know whether she is balked or respited.

The lion broods and broods; and deep in his subconsciousness

THE HARD CASE OF BELGIUM

there stirs the knowledge that Germany will never fight unless—unless—unless—the lion does not quite know what, nor at all want to know what; but disinterested observers complete the sentence thus: unless Germany can be persuaded that the lion is sentimentally attached to her, and is becoming a bit of a Pacifist and will not fight.

The luck that has so seldom failed the lion had sent Prince Lichnowsky as German Ambassador to London. There was nothing wrong in being very friendly to the Prince: a charming man with a very charming wife. There was our Sir Edward Grey, also a charming man, always ready to talk peace quite sincerely at tea parties, with all Europe if necessary. The lion knew in his heart that Grey knew nothing of the ways of lions, and would not approve of them if he did; for Grey had ideas instead of the One Idea. And Lichnowsky knew so much less of the ways of lions than Grey that he actually thought Grey was the lion. The lion said, "This is not my doing: England's destiny has provided Grey and provided Lichnowsky. England's star is still in the zenith." Lichnowsky thought Grey every day a greater statesman and a more charming man, and became every day more persuaded that the lion's heart had never changed and that he was still friendly. And Grey thought Lichnowsky perhaps rather a fool, but was none the less nice to him.

Then there was Asquith, the lucid lawyer, the man who could neither remember the past nor foresee the future, yet was always a Yorkshireman, with ancient English depths behind his mirror-like lucidity in which something of lion craft could lurk without troubling the surface of the mirror. Asquith suddenly found working in himself an unaccountable but wholly irresistible impulse to hide and deny those arrangements with the French commanders which had frightened Germany. He said to Grey "You must go to the French and say that we are not bound to anything." Grey, the amiable lover of peace, was delighted. He went; and the French, with imperturbable politeness, made a note of it. And then Asquith and Grey, with good consciences, found themselves busily persuading the world that the lion was not bound

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

to help France and Russia when the great day of Armageddon came. They persuaded the nation; they persuaded the House of Commons; they persuaded their own Cabinet; and at last—at last—they persuaded Germany. And the lion crouched. Almost before he was ready, the devil's own luck struck down the Archduke by the hand of an assassin, and Austria saw Servia in her grasp at last. She flew at Servia; Russia flew at Austria; Germany flew at France; and the lion, with a mighty roar, sprang at last, and, in a flash, had his teeth and claws in the rival of England, and will now not let her go for all the Pacifists or Socialists in the world until he is either killed or back on his Waterloo pedestal again.

That, gentlemen of England, is the epic of the Yellow Book. That was the roar your simpletons mistook for the bleat of a peaceful sheep attacked by a wicked wolf. Much you will care for their babble about old treaties, and their assurances that you are incapable of anything so wicked as the hurrah with which your share in the lion's heart responds to his roar, and their piteous stories like the old stories of Boney eating babies, and their frantic lies and shameful abuse of the enemy whom you must now hold sacred from every weapon meaner than your steel.

As for me, I understand it; I vibrate to it; I perceive the might and mystery of it; and all sorts of chords in me echo the demand that the lion's last fight shall be the best fight of all, and Germany the last foe overcome. But I am a Socialist, and know well that the lion's day is gone by, and that the bravest lion gets shot in the long run. I foresee that his victory will not, like the old victories, lead to a century of security: I know that it will create a situation more dangerous than the situation of six months ago, and that only by each western nation giving up every dream of supremacy can that situation be mastered. A lion within frontiers is, after all, a lion in a cage; and the future has no use for caged lions fighting to defend their own chains. In future we must fight, not alone for England, but for the welfare of the world. But for all that, the lion is a noble old beast; and his past is a splendid past and his breed more valiant than ever: too valiant nowadays,

THE HARD CASE OF BELGIUM

indeed, to be merely English *contra mundum*. I take off my hat to him as he makes his last spring, and shall not cease to wave it because of the squealing of the terrified chickens.

It must not be supposed that the Old Lion quite liked this. One of his less heroic characteristics is an intense dislike to having every i dotted and every t crossed. The more fiercely his squadrons charge the more anxious he is that the signal should be given not by the trumpet but by the harmonium. He is, in short, an inveterate and incorrigible old hypocrite of the most successful kind: that is, the hypocrite who imposes on himself even when he imposes on no one else. And as my part in the play is usually that of the gentleman in Love's Labor's Lost who enters crying "Now step I forth to whip hypocrisy" the lion is always in two minds about me: one of pleasant surprise at being so well understood and ably supported in such a quarter, and the other of intense disapproval of my stripping him morally naked in the process. When everyone can see my hand I play with my cards on the table, and make a merit of it; but an English diplomatist, even when he has played the ace of spades in the face of all men, likes to believe that it is the ace of hearts, and is hurt by any refusal to share that belief. It is hard to please a lion who, whilst delighting in being the king of beasts, terrible and mighty in battle, nevertheless insists on clothing himself in lamb's wool as the Prince of Peace all the time.

I must now go back a month, to the 7th November, a week before the publication of Common Sense. The overwhelming sensation of the first months of the war was the devastation of Belgium not only by the German invasion, but by the Belgian and British defence. A multitude of Belgian refugees and wounded soldiers were dumped on these shores, and received rashly, but

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

very honorably, into the households of British patriots, most of whom could ill afford to keep them, and soon became pressingly anxious to get rid of them. But those of us who kept our heads saw that the support of the refugees could not be left to private hospitality; and a prodigious begging on their behalf set in, stimulated by the stories of atrocities which the refugees brought, and which they soon had to supplement liberally from their imagination, so great was the demand for them. In my own neighborhood in the country a young Belgian warrior, convalescing from his wound, described how a beautiful woman, with her hands chopped off at the wrists, had held up the bleeding stumps and said "Avenge me, brother." He assumed the rank of Count, and was made much of at shooting parties in the country before returning to his native land to resume his normal career as a tailor's cutter. I mention his case, not as typical of the behavior of his countrymen, but as illustrating the boundless credulity of which he took humorous advantage. The late Lord Bryce, then an old man of wide public experience, and an eminent historian to boot, acted as chairman of a committee for the collection of tales from Belgium, and published a collection of horrors and obscenities, vouched for as "told by a Belgian corporal" and the like, which had a considerable vogue. The truth must have been horrible enough; for soldiers in a hostile country, living in continual dread of being sniped, soon reach a state of nerves in which they are capable of every extremity of terrorism. It was not until later that we read the reports of the condition in which our own houses were left by the British recruits on our east coast who occupied them for months before taking the field, and learnt that hostile Fritz in Belgian billets had been no dirtier or more destructive in his habits than friendly Tommy in East Anglian ones. And the incidents of our Black and Tan occupation of Ireland were also still in the future. But even had we had these lessons our nerves were so upset that no possible truth could have satisfied our appetite for the atrocity stimulant; and we swallowed the Bryce report in intoxicating draughts.

The report was useful enough to the collectors of relief funds

THE HARD CASE OF BELGIUM

in England; but when the appeal was extended to America it was another matter. The Belgian point of view was lost sight of in our eagerness to use the stories as sticks to beat the Germans with, and as reasons for supporting civilized England in her crusade against barbarous Prussia. And as the evidence offered by Lord Bryce seemed to me to be worthless, and I saw that the Belgians were suffering from the operations of the Allies as well as of the Germans, I soon found myself in trouble.

Sir Hall Caine was asked by The Daily Telegraph to edit a book of gratuitous contributions by leading authors and composers, to be sold for the benefit of the Belgians. He asked me for a contribution; and I duly furnished it. But The Daily Telegraph of that day, being still under its old traditional management as a bourgeois paper, obliged, as such, to keep twenty years behind the times in domestic politics whilst being otherwise breezily up to date, was terrified by Common Sense, and absolutely refused to allow my name to be connected with its book. Hall Caine, always chivalrous in his sense of personal obligation, declared that he owed it to me to resign the editorship; but I dissuaded him, pointing out that nothing mattered at the moment but getting the money for the Belgians, and that the omission of my contribution would not make a penny difference to them or to anyone else, whereas his resignation might spoil the book's *début*. He had his revenge immediately; for on the question of an appeal to America coming up, the Belgians surprised The Daily Telegraph considerably by insisting that I should draft it, which I accordingly did. The explanation of their unexpected preference is to be found in the following open letter to President Wilson, which had appeared in The Nation a week before the publication of Common Sense. I was apparently the only publicly articulate person in London who could conceive that the Belgians had any case distinct from the British case.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

(From The Nation of the 7th November 1914)

SIR. I petition you to invite the Neutral Powers to confer with the United States of America for the purpose of requesting Britain, France, and Germany to withdraw from the soil of Belgium and fight out their quarrel on their own territories. However the sympathies of the neutral States may be divided, and whatever points now at issue between the belligerent Powers may be doubtful, there is one point on which there can be neither division nor doubt, and that is that the belligerent armies have no right to be in Belgium, much less to fight in Belgium and involve the innocent inhabitants of that country in their reciprocal slaughter. You will not question my right to address this petition to you. You are the official head of the nation that is beyond all question chief of the Neutral Powers, marked out by commanding magnitude, by modern democratic constitution, and by freedom from the complication of monarchy and its traditions, which have led Europe into the quaint absurdity of a war waged formally between the German Kaiser, the German Tsar, the German King of the Belgians, the German King of England, the German Emperor of Austria, and a gentleman who shares with you the distinction of not being related to any of them, and is therefore describable monachically as one Poincaré, a Frenchman.

I make this petition on its merits, without claiming any representative character except such as attaches to me as a human being. Nobody here has asked me to do it. Except among the large class of constitutional beggars, the normal English feeling is that it is no use demanding a thing if you feel certain that it will be refused, and are not in a position to enforce compliance. Also, that the party whose request is refused and not enforced looks ridiculous. Many Englishmen will say that a request from you to the belligerents to evacuate Belgium would be refused; could not be enforced; and would make the asker ridiculous. We are, in short,

THE HARD CASE OF BELGIUM

not a prayerful nation. But to you it will be clear that even the strongest Power, or even allied group of Powers, can have its position completely changed by an expression of the public opinion of the rest of the world. In your clear western atmosphere and in your peculiarly responsible position as the head centre of western democracy, you, when the European situation became threatening three months ago, must have been acutely aware of the fact to which Europe was so fatally blind: namely, that the simple solution of the difficulty in which the menace of the Franco-Russo-British Entente placed Germany was for the German Emperor to leave his western frontier under the safeguard of the neighborliness and good faith of American, British, and French Democracy, and then await quite calmly any action that Russia might take against his country on the east. Had he done so, we could not have attacked him from behind; and had France made such an attack—and it is in the extremest degree improbable that French public opinion would have permitted such a hazardous and unjustifiable adventure—he would at worst have confronted it with the fullest sympathy of Britain and the United States, and at best with their active assistance. Unhappily, German kings do not allow Democracy to interfere in their foreign policy; do not believe in neighborliness; and do believe in cannon and cannon-fodder. The Kaiser never dreamt of confiding his frontier to you and to the humanity of his neighbors. And the diplomats of Europe never thought of that easy and right policy, and could not suggest any substitute for it, with the hideous result which is before you.

Now that this mischief has been done, and the two European thunderclouds have met and are discharging their lightnings, it is not for me to meddle with the question whether the United States should take a side in their warfare as far as it concerns themselves alone. But I may plead for a perfectly innocent neutral State, the State of Belgium, which is being ravaged in a horrible manner by the belligerents. Her surviving population is flying into all the neighboring countries to escape from the incessant hail of shrapnel and howitzer shells from British cannon, French cannon, German

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

cannon, and, most tragic of all, Belgian cannon; for the Belgian army is being forced to devastate its own country in its own defence.

For this there can be no excuse; and at such a horror the rest of the world cannot look on in silence without incurring the guilt of the bystander who witnesses a crime without even giving the alarm. I grant that Belgium, in her extreme peril, made one mistake. She called to her aid the Powers of the Entente alone instead of calling on the whole world of kindly men. She should have called on America, too; and it is hard to see how you could in honor have disregarded that call. But if Belgium says nothing, but only turns her eyes dumbly towards you whilst you look at the red ruin into which her villages, her heaps of slain, her monuments and treasures, are being hurled by her friends and enemies alike, are you any the less bound to speak out than if Belgium had asked you to lend her a million soldiers?

Not for a moment do I suggest that your intervention should be an intervention on behalf of either the Allies or the Entente. If you consider both sides equally guilty, we know that you can find reasons for that verdict. But Belgium is innocent; and it is on behalf of Belgium that so much of the world as is still at peace is waiting for a lead from you. No other question need be prejudged. If Germany maintains her claim to a right of way through Belgium on a matter which she believed (however erroneously) to be one of life and death to her as a nation, nobody, not even China, now pretends that such rights of way have not their place among those common human rights which are superior to the more artificial rights of nationality. I think, for example, that if Russia made a descent on your continent under circumstances which made it essential to the maintenance of your national freedom that you should move an army through Canada, you would ask our leave to do so, and take it by force if we did not grant it. You may reasonably suspect, even if all our statesmen raise a shriek of denial, that we should take a similar liberty under similar circumstances in defiance of all the scraps of paper in our Foreign Office dustbin. You see, I am frank with you, and fair, I hope, to Ger-

THE HARD CASE OF BELGIUM

many. But a right of way is not a right of conquest; and even the right of way was not, as the Imperial Chancellor imagined, a matter of life and death at all, but a militarist hallucination, and one that has turned out, so far, a military mistake. In short, there was no such case of overwhelming necessity as would have made the denial of a right of way to the German army equivalent to a refusal to save German independence from destruction, and therefore to an act of war against her, justifying a German conquest of Belgium. You can therefore leave the abstract question of international rights of way quite unprejudiced by your action. You can leave every question between the belligerents fully open, and yet, in the common interest of the world, ask Germany to clear out of Belgium, into France or across the Channel into England if she can, back home if she can force no other passage, but at all events out of Belgium. A like request would, of course, be addressed to Britain and to France at the same time. The technical correctness of our diplomatic position as to Belgium may be unimpeachable; but as the effect of our shells on Belgium is precisely the same as that of the German shells, and as by fighting on Belgian soil we are doing her exactly the same injury that we should have done her if the violation of her neutrality had been initiated by us instead of by Germany, we could not decently refuse to fall in with a general evacuation.

At all events, your intervention could not fail to produce at least the result that even if the belligerents refused to comply, your request would leave them in an entirely new and very unpleasant relation to public opinion. No matter how powerful a State is, it is not above feeling the vast difference between doing something that nobody condemns and something that everybody condemns except the interested parties.

That difference alone would be well worth your pains. But it is by no means a foregone conclusion that a blank refusal would be persisted in. Germany must be aware that the honor of England is now so bound up with the complete redemption of Belgium from the German occupation that to keep Antwerp and Brussels she must take Portsmouth and London. France is no less deeply

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

engaged. You can judge better than I what chance Germany now has, or can persuade herself she has, of exhausting or overwhelming her western enemies without ruining herself in the attempt. Whatever else the war and its horrors may have done or not done, you will agree with me that it has made an end of the dreams of military and naval steam-rolling in which the whole wretched business began. At a cost which the conquest of a whole continent would hardly justify, these terrible armaments and the heroic hosts which wield them push one another a few miles back and forward in a month, and take and retake some miserable village three times over in less than a week. Can you doubt that though we have lost all fear of being beaten (our darkened towns, and the panics of our papers, with their endless scares and silly inventions, are mere metropolitan hysteria), we are getting very tired of a war in which, having now re-established our old military reputation, and taught the Germans that there is no future for their Empire without our friendship and that of France, we have nothing more to gain? In London and Paris and Berlin nobody at present dares say "Sirs, ye are brethren: why do ye wrong one to another?"; for the slightest disposition towards a Christian view of things is regarded as a shooting matter in these capitals; but Washington is still privileged to talk common humanity to the nations.

Finally, I may remind you of another advantage which your aloofness from the conflict gives you. Here, in England and in France, men are going to the front every day; their women and children are all within earshot; and no man is hard-hearted enough to let them hear the worst of what is going on in Belgium now. We talk at you of Louvain as we do of Rheims in the hope of enlisting you on our side by prejudicing you against the Germans, forgetting how sorely you must be tempted to say as you look on at what we are doing "Well, if European literature, as represented by the library of Louvain, and European religion, as represented by the Cathedral of Rheims, have not got us beyond this, in God's name let them perish." I am thinking of other things: of the honest Belgians, whom I have seen nursing their wounds, and

THE HARD CASE OF BELGIUM

whom I recognize at a glance as plain men, innocent of all warlike intentions, trusting to the wisdom and honesty of the rulers and diplomatists who have betrayed them, taken from their farms and their businesses to destroy and be destroyed for no good purpose that might not have been achieved better and sooner by neighborly means. I am thinking of the authentic news that no papers dare publish, not of the lies they all publish to divert your attention from the truth. In America these things can be said without driving American mothers and wives mad: here, we have to set our teeth and go forward. We cannot be just: we cannot see beyond the range of our guns. The roar of the shrapnel deafens us; the black smoke of the howitzer blinds us; and what these do to our bodily senses our passions do to our imaginations. For justice, we must do as the medieval cities did: call in a stranger. You are not altogether that to us; but you can look at all of us impartially. And you are the spokesman of Western Democracy. That is why I appeal to you.

The Belgians had not been unprepared for this presentation of their case; for on the 23rd September I had written a letter to Charles Sarolea on the subject which found its way into print. As he held the chair of literature at Edinburgh University he protested against my writing of the English instead of the British; but, as it certainly was not Scotland's war, the aggrieved party was the English nation, which might justly have complained of being held responsible for a war made in the Foreign Office behind its back. Here is the letter.

10 ADELPHI TERRACE, W.C.,
23rd September 1914.

MY DEAR SAROLEA: It is very difficult for me to say anything that will help the Belgian Relief Fund. It seems to me altogether disgraceful that we should not only fail to save the neutral soil of Belgium from violation in the worst form by rapine, fire, and

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

sword, but abandon her refugees to the impulse of private charity as we abandon beggars. Reading our newspapers and the speeches of our Cabinet ministers, one would suppose that we had triumphantly and majestically held our shield before the women and children of Belgium, and hurled back the invader shoulder to shoulder with her men. As a matter of fact, we have left her to bear single-handed the first furious rush of our enemy. Belgium has broken that rush for us at frightful odds, and has never let slip a word of reproach for the delay in reinforcing her. In these terrible first days the Belgians must have said often enough "Where are the English?" And when we congratulated ourselves so very comfortably on the fact that we at last got our troops across the channel "without a single casualty" the Belgians must have been sorely tempted to remark quietly that things can always be done without casualties by people who take their time about it. Yet no word of that kind has reached us. If there have been moments when King Albert has been tempted to curse the day when his country was led to depend on treaties and their guarantors, he has most chivalrously taken care that we should not know it, and has allowed our foolish and inconsiderate journalists to persuade their readers that we are the saviors of Belgium instead of Belgium being the savior of France and England. He did not even permit himself to say, when we offered to lend his country money, "Thank you: the Germans will be happy to do that when the war is over; and as Frankfort is nearer than London, I need not trouble you."

I say these things lest you should suppose that nobody ever thought of them in this country. But many of us have thought of them and been a good deal troubled by them, and ashamed of the utter want of tact, caused by thoughtlessness and conceit, with which our Press boasted of our championship of Belgium, and evidently considered that it had done everything that the Belgians could expect when it had praised the bravery of their soldiers very much as if all Belgians were four feet high and constitutionally timid. Please do anything you can to make your countrymen understand that our obligation to Belgium is fully realized by

THE HARD CASE OF BELGIUM

many English people who have no means of making their feeling in the matter known, and that the delay in coming to her aid was not the fault of the people, but of the diplomatists and party politicians who wished to conceal their intention of going to war until the actual outbreak of hostilities made retreat impossible. This is why we always go to war without being prepared for war. Had the matter been in the hands of the people, our Expeditionary Force would have reached Liège before the Germans.

CHAPTER IV

NONSENSE ABOUT NEUTRALITY

As to Belgian neutrality, our excuse for plunging into the war, it is now the deadest of dead issues. Belgium promptly celebrated our victory by making a treaty with France, neither concealing the fact nor letting us know the terms. As we had done virtually the same thing before the war, and were not in a position to fight our late allies, we said nothing about it either to the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey or to the millions of surviving unknown warriors who had fought, and quite frequently bled, to keep brave little Belgium neutral. So they never noticed it. It remains one of the ironical disillusionments which cured the war fever by a reaction into cynicism.

But the subject was very much alive in the first year of hostilities; and I had many passages of arms about it until the war passed into the phase in which nobody any longer cared what we were supposed to be fighting for, as we at last realized that from the moment the first shot is fired or the first blow struck, fighting has only one object: victory. Long before that point was reached the Allies had won the war and the Germans lost it. The battle of the Marne was as decisive as the battle of Waterloo; and we now know that the German commanders felt this, and yet had to go on slaughtering and being slaughtered for four years more because the German people, like the other peoples concerned, were so thoroughly humbugged all through the war (they were not told about the Marne) that they would not have believed in the conclusiveness of the defeat even had their military advisors dared to let them know that it had happened. I myself lost all dread of the famous German military machine when Liège was attacked without siege artillery, and the attempt to carry it at the first assault, on which the success of the rush to Paris depended, failed. In losing a fortnight there, Germany lost the war.

Rather than leave my readers the least excuse for clinging to guaranteed neutrality as a preventive of war in the future I will

NONSENSE ABOUT NEUTRALITY

commemorate a long exploded controversy by digging up a skeleton or two from the site of the skirmishes I had with assailants who rushed at me from all sides when I tore up what the Germans had left of that famous Scrap of Paper, the treaty of 1839.

(From The Nation of the 20th February 1915)

SIR: Professor Kirchwey's letter is so agreeable in its good humor and genuine appreciativeness that I owe him a further attempt to make myself clear on the subject of neutrality.

Neutrality is utter humbug. That is my position. There is no such thing as a breach of neutrality, because there is no such thing as neutrality. I hope that is clear enough.

The importance of bringing this simple natural fact home at present arises from three considerations. 1. The danger of obscuring the real issues of the war by the false issue of the neutrality of Belgium. 2. The danger that instead of real terms of peace, fictitious terms in the form of fresh guarantees of neutrality may be accepted as valid. 3. The general objection to throwing stones when you live in a glass house and are allied to Eastern Powers whose whole history is a huge cucumber frame.

Those who insist that neutrality is real and sacred are committed by the facts to the following propositions. 1. Germany has not violated Belgian neutrality: she has made war on Belgium, which her guarantee of Belgium's neutrality in no way abrogated her right to do; and her guarantee of Belgium's neutrality still stands in spite of the war, and actually entitles her to treat a violation of it by another Power as a *casus belli*. 2. France and England have violated the neutrality of Belgium by invading her and fighting on her soil, though they are not at war with her. 3. Germany offered to keep the peace with Belgium on a condition (that of a right of way) which Britain was herself the first to demand and to enforce by war in China. 4. Britain and France refused to respect Belgian neutrality except on a condition which they knew would not be fulfilled, and which in any case Belgium could not control: namely, that Germany would keep the peace

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

with Belgium. 5. Germany offered peace in Belgium. 6. Britain ordered war, peremptorily.

I defy any international jurist to evade these propositions except by shewing that they are a *reductio ad absurdum* of the theory of neutrality, and admitting that Belgium might as well have been a free country as a neutralized one for all the use the guarantee proved. And it is because I was not duped by that theory that I have set myself from the first to discredit the Belgian pretext for the war, and to induce our Ministers and newspapers to drop it. I did so even before the documents found in Brussels by the Germans left the Foreign Office so completely bowled out on the Belgian point by the German Chancellor that it had not a word to say, and was reduced to hiring a street boy to put out his tongue at him. That was what came of not taking my advice and evacuating an untenable position.

I pass on to the Monroe doctrine, cited by Professor Kirchwey as the supreme modern case of neutralization.

The Monroe doctrine is balderdash. It is not a doctrine at all. Its validity to any intelligent person is exactly what it was to Cortez and Pizarro and the Mayflower pilgrims, to Clive and Dupleix, to William the Conqueror, to Cæsar and Napoleon, to Hengist and Horsa, to Joshua in Canaan, to Henry V in France, to Kitchener in the Sudan, to Kruger and Cecil Rhodes in South Africa, to Strongbow in Ireland and Edward in Scotland, to Russia in Siberia, and to Japan in the advantage she has taken of the war to make that startling Frederician grab in Mongolia and Manchuria which has just leaked out after a month's concealment by our Government. I have as much right to annex and ravage the State of Colorado as Mr Rockefeller. If the British Empire ever decides to annex the United States (say with a view to improving their local government) it will not take the slightest notice of the Monroe doctrine, nor will the public opinion of the world be in the very faintest degree biassed against it by the breach thereof. If the United States should ever decide to annex Canada on the ground that the Monroe doctrine obviously requires the extrusion of Britain from the North American continent, they will have to

NONSENSE ABOUT NEUTRALITY

take exactly the same steps as if the Monroe doctrine had never been formulated or thought of. The Monroe doctrine did not help the redskin against the white man; and it will not help the redskin's conqueror when his turn comes. The Monroe doctrine is tosh; and everybody knows it.

Why is it that the European militarists, who annex every country they can conquer, are not at all likely to annex America, and even pretend to respect the Monroe doctrine as an excuse for not trying to? Because they are afraid of the army, the navy, and the people of the United States. Why did Germany make war on Belgium? Because she was afraid to delay her rush on Paris by attacking France through Lorraine and Alsace. Why did she attack France? Because she was terrified by the Russian mobilization, and was afraid that France would strike her from behind when she was attacked by Russia. Why did we attack Germany? Because we were afraid of her growing naval strength, and believed that she would be irresistible if she conquered Russia and France, and thus left us without effective allies. Frightened animals are dangerous; and Man is no exception. We in the west of Europe are all fighting because we were afraid not to.

If the war is to be concluded on ethical principles of any sort, then the settlement will be exactly what it would have been if there had been no war at all. The victory or defeat of the belligerents will not alter by one jot or tittle either justice or human rights or ethnology or religion or language. If England is in the right, a defeat will not put her in the wrong: if Germany is in the wrong, victory would leave her more in the wrong than ever. The day for believing that the judgment of God is given through the ordeal of battle is gone by: a European or American professing such a belief nowadays in time of peace would be removed to an asylum. We are fighting solely to gratify our pugnacity and satisfy our pride: that is, for the good of our souls. This is the real glory of war; but it is important that we should be able to stop when we have had enough of it.

Neutrality and Monroe's Folly being thus banished to Saturn,

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

what realities do we find unmasked by their disappearance? Simply that it is open to any government or combination of governments to declare that it will make war on any State that invades a certain specified territory. No Government can possibly have or acquire any rights to do such a thing; but all States have the power to do it; and if they also have the means to make their threat good, their might will be accepted perforce as an effective practical substitute for right. But nothing can give that might the validity of right. Russia, Germany, and Britain had the power to set up Belgium as a buffer State against France, and to make France accept the arrangement. Britain had the power to maintain Afghanistan as a buffer State against Russia, and Morocco as a buffer State between Gibraltar and any possible fortification of the opposite pillar of Hercules by a rival. France had the power to buy Britain out of Morocco by abandoning Egypt to her, neither party having the smallest right either in Egypt or Morocco except the right of their own will to be there. If you come to rights other than the right of the sword, which is might pure and simple, only the Belgians have any rights in Belgium; and the so-called guarantors of Belgium, by dictating her foreign policy, or rather refusing to allow her to have any foreign policy, and then failing to save her from being overrun by Germany, have more reason to blush at the mention of her name than to invite the admiration of the world for their good faith to her. Of all her devastators and betrayers, Germany has the most cause to boast. She has at least been victorious. But they had better all take a hint from Lady Teazle, and leave neutrality out of the question.

In saying this, I am by no means suggesting that we should abandon all conscience in international affairs. But I am insisting that we should have the strength of mind and the common sense to give up pretending that the morality of Junker and Jingo diplomacy and of war of any sort is the morality of the nursery and the schoolroom. What State is there among all the belligerents, except Serbia (which started the whole business with an act of regicide: not her first), that has not ruthlessly broken treaties, and invaded, conquered, and annexed small and weak States, or

NONSENSE ABOUT NEUTRALITY

that does not point to England as the great exemplar in such proceedings? Professor Kirchwéy must know that nothing sickens America more than the insult offered to her intelligence and the nausea set up in her moral sense by British writers who persist in proclaiming that the cause of this war is the violation by Germany of the principles of Dr Watts, and the sacred mission of Britain to vindicate those principles. We are saved from the danger of America's allowing her Germans and pro-Germans to exploit this nausea to the extent of driving her into the war against us partly by the fact that the enemy is as Pharisaical as we are, and partly because we have enough unterrified truth-tellers to convince America that the pseudo-patriots and Dr Watts-contra-Nietzscheans no more represent British opinion than they represent American opinion.

As I write these lines, all Europe is reading Mr Winston Churchill's proud declaration that the navy, as Britain's main weapon, was fully as prepared as the Germans when the war broke out, and that this was the result of an accumulation of ammunition which has been going on for the last five or six years. Professor Kirchwéy is reading it too, and perhaps remarking that he was a little hasty in his incredulity as to the British Lion. I quite understand that incredulity. It certainly does seem incredible that the amiable drifters, the snobs, the prigs, the futile amateurs, the well-intentioned innocents who are put forward as the official staff of the lion should do or plan anything lion-like. The Professor is not the only sceptic. But all the same, the fleet was ready; and the expeditionary force was ready; and we had been accumulating ammunition for years. That is not done by mere amiability and priggery and snobbery: it means teeth and claws and lion's temper.

Lastly, I could, an if I would, explain to Professor Kirchwéy why the Liberals are so desperately determined to pretend that the war is all about Belgium, and that we never dreamt of such a dreadful thing until the Kaiser wickedly tore up the Scrap of Paper. But this eternal blazon must not be in a Liberal paper until Mr Asquith and Sir Edward Grey either retire or pass over to the

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

party they have placed in command of the House of Commons for the sake of their war.

This letter is a fair summary of my final contention as to neutrality in general; The editor to whom it was addressed was the late H. W. Massingham, who, though he felt as a very English Englishman about the war, carried on with extraordinary courage and independence all through, refusing any kind of censorship, and receiving every instalment of official intelligence with blunt assurances that he did not desire any, and would pay no attention to it. He supported me valiantly when I ceased to address my polemics to *The New Statesman*, which, edited by Mr Clifford Sharpe, had had the courage to publish *Common Sense* and several subsequent sallies of mine. But I had a proprietary interest in *The New Statesman*. This made it improper for me to make use of it when the sinking of the *Lusitania* raised the temperature of the war fever on the home front to danger point. Thenceforth I felt that I must depend for publicity on editors who were either conspicuously hostile to my views or at least absolutely independent of my personal goodwill.

My letter to *The Nation* quoted above gives no hint of the earlier hand-to-hand combats waged in *The New Statesman* on the specific point of the validity of the *Scrap of Paper* whilst it was still possible to debate with some good humor. I offer the following letter as a sample, selecting it for two reasons. First, it contains a few burlesques of the vituperation then showered on me. The burlesques, being by myself, are harmlessly amusing, whereas the originals could not fairly be quoted now even if I possessed the copyright, as the writers have long since forgotten their wrath and forgiven me. Second, they shew an old and recurring controversial trouble of mine. Whenever I point out a flaw in any case, its advocates instantly cry out frantically that I am a supporter of the opposite case: for instance, when I lately took exception to a new and very questionable sort of evidence

NONSENSE ABOUT NEUTRALITY

put in against a man on his trial for murder I was immediately advertized all over the Press by excited correspondents as perversely defending murder out of a natural taste for it, and asked how I should like to be murdered myself. In the same way, when I said that the violation of Belgian neutrality as an excuse for the war would not impose on neutral diplomatists, and had better be dropped, it was immediately assumed that I had the mentality of the German General Staff, and was an ardent ally of the Kaiser and an ungrateful traitor to England, out of whose playgoers I was shamelessly making a huge fortune.

Here is the letter.

(*From The New Statesman, 19th December 1914*)

SIR: I must thank your correspondent for taking the trouble to look up some authorities on international law instead of being an international law unto himself, like most of the controversialists on the case of Belgium. But his extracts do not shake my position in the least. Out of seven, five are statements of historic fact, which is not in dispute. The other two point out, as a matter of simple classification, that neutralization treaties are not temporary treaties but so-called perpetual ones (a literally perpetual treaty is of course impossible): that is, they are infinite in their terms; they are "not subject to unilateral denunciation by either party"; and the consequences of breaking them may be of the most serious kind: to wit, war.

Add to this the article of The Hague Convention which declares that neutral territory is inviolable (an identical proposition), and you have all the legal points a nation has to consider when it upholds a neutralization treaty or throws it over, as the case may be. As we are already in court for violating Swiss neutrality by an aeroplane raid, and our ally Russia has not even thought of Persian neutrality in operating against the Turks; as, moreover, in a war between France and Austria, with a possibility of intervention by Italy, Swiss neutrality may presently hang by a thread, I may perhaps count on a growing patience if I reiterate my

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

urgent warning against claiming too much for these treaties. As a matter of fact neutralization treaties are not inviolable. They afford respectable pretexts for war; and they sometimes have sound reasons for it at their back; but they are not, and never can be, really inviolable. They can always be got round; and whether a blunt Teutonic minister blurts out the real nature of the transaction, or a subtle Latin minister puts it into correct legal form, the result is the same: a scrap of paper. Experience shews that whenever neutrality as a legal convention comes under a sufficiently heavy pressure of circumstances, it proves a mere figment: the moral being that no nation at war should talk about neutrality without remembering that before a week is over it may find itself compelled to throw it to the winds. It is a tempting stick to beat a dog with when the enemy has discarded it; but those who wield it too confidently may find that they have been pickling a rod for their own backs. In insisting on this I am not a pro-Prussian: I am simply that rarer phenomenon: a man who can see a fortnight ahead, and who has a constitutional mistrust of too tempting openings.

Let me explain legal neutrality in easy terms. Neutrality treaties, like other contracts, are valid only *rebus sic stantibus*. If Mr Balfour is attacked with influenza and calls in Sir Almroth Wright, who, although Mr Balfour is eager to play a round of golf or take part in a debate, and feels quite well enough to do so, takes a more serious view of the case and makes Mr Balfour promise faithfully not to go out of doors until Sir Almroth calls next day, then unquestionably Mr Balfour is bound as an honorable man by that promise, and may be denounced as a liar quite logically by Mr Willie Redmond or Mr Lloyd George with all their powers of invective if he breaks it. Nevertheless if Mr Balfour's house catches fire that night, Mr Balfour, though bound by his word to remain in his bed and be burnt to death, will skip out of it with the utmost agility and rush into the street without the smallest regard for his sacred engagement to Sir Almroth. And Mr Lloyd George and Mr Willie Redmond will never dream of blaming him for it, not because he has not broken his word—

NONSENSE ABOUT NEUTRALITY

he has—but because, as they know, and everybody else knows, they would have done just the same in Mr Balfour's place, an attitude of moral superiority on their part would only make them ridiculous. And Mr Balfour, when reproached by Sir Almroth (who might regard his friend's dislike of being burnt as a very poor excuse for interfering with his inoculation treatment), would plead that a promise holds good only whilst the circumstances contemplated by the parties remain undisturbed. Even a maiden promising to meet her swain in a certain field may break tryst if a farmer introduces a bull into that field. Like the Imperial Chancellor and Mr Balfour, she would plead a state of necessity. Like Von Bernhardi, she would plead that her promise held only *rebus sic stantibus*.

Now I am not going to labor Bernhardi's point that the addition of 800,000 square miles of territory to the 11,000 square miles of the Belgium of 1839 reduced all the treaties of that date affecting Belgium to scraps of paper. What I wish to point out to amateurs of international law is that if law is to be kept in touch with reality, the jurist must never forget that the neutralization of a country is in any concrete sense an impossible operation. An elderly gentleman, intruding on his daughter and her young man, may say "Dont mind me, dear: go on talking to John just as if I were not in the room"; but the daughter will feel that her parent has raised, in an acute form, Hamlet's question "to be or not to be?" and will decide that the old man cannot do both at once: in short, that he cannot neutralize himself effectively without leaving the room. Now a country cannot leave the room. It cannot either neutralize itself or be neutralized except in a conventional legal sense. To be neutralized means to be neitherized, to be neither one thing nor another, to be as if you did not exist. You can neutralize Switzerland in a legal sense; but you cannot enable soldiers to march through Mont Blanc as if it was not there, nor to emulate Edward Lear's old man of Coblenz, the length of whose legs was immense, by going with one prance from the Tyrol to France. Whence it follows that at this present moment, when Austria and France are at war, Switzerland is very far from

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

being neutral in fact, whatever she may be in law: she is a very solid obstacle to the military operations of the two powers; and her legal inviolability may yet make all the difference between defeat and victory in a decisive battle. Sweden is legally neutral at present; but she is none the less preventing Russia from sending troops to the west across the Scandinavian peninsula. Holland is legally neutral; but she has prevented us from sending our warships up the Scheldt to relieve Antwerp. Serbia is a landlocked State. If the victim of the Serajevo murder had been the Prince of Wales instead of the Archduke, and the Serbs had refused us the redress they offered the Austrians, we should presumably declare war on them; but though the countries through which our troops would have to pass on a march to Belgrade might declare legal neutrality, they could not be really neutral. We should have to treat a declaration of neutrality as a declaration of war on us, and fight our way through —*durchhauen*, in fact.

Anyone who has carefully followed the current discussions of Belgian neutrality will see that this has never occurred to the disputants. They are arguing on the assumption that neutrality in international law is the same as neutrality in physics. They think of Belgium not only as a legally neutral country but as a vacuum. It is not a vacuum. Before its conquest by Germany it was a bulwark to France and an obstacle to Germany. Now it is a bulwark to Germany and an obstacle to France and Britain. But it is not, and never has been, and never can be, nothing. Respect for its legal neutrality may demand a heroic sacrifice from one belligerent whilst it confers a valuable advantage on the other. Now there are some sacrifices which no nation will make. Up to a certain point of sacrifice a nation will respect legal neutrality. But if the sacrifice threatens to be suicidal, it will affirm that its exaction constitutes an act of war on the part of the neutral nation, and will declare war on it. In this way it evades its obligation, because a nation which guarantees the neutrality of another nation obviously does not thereby surrender its own right to make war on it. If it did, that nation could injure it with impunity. If Belgium outraged us and re-

NONSENSE ABOUT NEUTRALITY

fused redress, we should make war on Belgium, and this would not even cancel our guarantee. It is true that when a nation evades its obligation to get at an adversary, the adversary naturally raises a cry of virtuous indignation, as there is no reason why it should throw away such advantage as moral indictments may confer. But the disinterested bystanding nations will, as in the imaginary case of Mr Balfour and Sir Almroth Wright, condemn the breach only if they feel sure that they would not have committed it under the like circumstances. To the more dangerously situated nations it may appear as natural as the action of a drowning man who steals a passing lifebuoy. To remote islands with no experience of invasion, it may seem a wanton outrage. That is why I warned and still warn our people here that the plea of the broken treaty and the infamous proposal and so forth, which seem such splendid points to them, seem forced and pompous on the continent, and why, if we press them too hard, we may find ourselves in the position of Mr Pickwick when he was angry with Captain Boldwig for putting him in the pound. "Perhaps" said his candid friend "he might say that some of us had been taking too much milk punch." And perhaps the Imperial Chancellor might remark slyly that for people who made the Opium War and sacked the Summer Palace, we are surprisingly particular. It is safer to be good-humored about these legal points, especially when you have much stronger arguments to fall back on.

A Liberal professor asks "is it hypocrisy to say that we are fighting for Belgium?" I have not heard anyone say that it is; so the question does not seem relevant. As to the question that *is* relevant, I will make one more attempt to make it clear to the professor. Suppose he stops a possible British recruit in the street and asks him to give a sound thrashing to a most abominable and damnable liar. The recruit will certainly say, before committing himself "What has he done?" The professor replies (we will suppose) that the miscreant sent word to a tax collector that he was out when he was, as a matter of fact, in. The recruit, feeling that but for the grace of God he might have told that lie

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

himself, declines to interfere, and passes on with a few more or less complimentary estimates of the professor's common sense. Presently, however, he sees the liar fall on the tax collector; brain him; burn his house; and send his distracted widow and infants adrift to starve. He immediately sails in and gives the murderer and incendiary, to the best of his ability, what for. Quite right too. But how if the professor, from a safe distance, keeps explaining that the recruit is fighting in the sacred cause of telling the truth to tax collectors, and not in the least because he has any vulgar sentimental sympathy with the tax collector's dislike of being brained and having his house burnt and his wife and children made homeless and destitute? Is there not a risk that the recruit may take this explanation of his motives in such bad part as to refuse to enlist in the professor's service, and even to threaten to start on him (say at the next election) when he is through with the liar turned murderer? If the professor will ponder this parable for a month or so very earnestly he may possibly begin to see that it is possible not only to fight for Belgium without fighting for a doubtful technical point of law, but even to resent very strongly every attempt to claim for such a very uninteresting abstraction the efforts and sacrifices you are making for your duty to your neighbor. It is true that treaties are broken only at long intervals of years, whereas poor people are turned out of their houses to starve every day by their compatriotic landlords; so perhaps professors get so used to evictions that they cease to attach any importance to them, whereas breach of treaty has all the charm and interest of novelty; but that is not how Thomas Atkins looks at it; and the man I want to get at just now is Thomas Atkins and not Professor Dryasdust.

Then there is Mr Smith, who makes no distinction between the official doctrine of the Catholic Church and the doctrine of Christ. I do. He also thinks that if a nation has a duty it is necessarily a Christian duty. But that is clearly not so. Many of our duties are much older than Christianity; and some of them are so flatly opposed to Christianity that when the Doukhobors

NONSENSE ABOUT NEUTRALITY

attempted to behave like Christians they presently found themselves in the hands of the police. But here again I find myself taken to task, not for the very careful statements I have made, but for notions that are associated with these statements in the minds of careless people. Thus, when the Archbishop of York lately implied that the personal impression made on him by the Kaiser was not that usually made by bloodthirsty scoundrels, it was immediately inferred that the Archbishop had sold his country to the Germans and was longing to see York Cathedral bombarded by Krupp guns, and the eyes and hands of the inhabitants gouged out and chopped off by intoxicated Uhlans whilst the Archbishop roystered with the Crown Prince in the episcopal palace. And when the Archbishop went on to ask us as Christians to pray for our enemies, an immortal vicar up and said that he had not the smallest intention of praying for the Germans until they shewed some change of mind. Also the diocese produced a most amazing collection of cads who reviled the Archbishop in *The Yorkshire Post* in terms which must have convinced the Kaiser, if he read them, that he is engaged in a Holy War.

Now what I said was that the prevalence of fire-eating vicars, and the scarcity of Archbishops who are also Christians and gentlemen, make working men feel cynical about the Church; and that if the Church would close its doors and say "Ye shall not enter into God's house until your hands are cleansed from your brothers' blood" the working classes would think a good deal better of it. I am told that being shut out of church would be hard on us—that many of us would really care. Well, I said so. Otherwise there would be no point in doing it.

But there is a good deal to make us all cynical in the way we stay-at-home civilians and paper warriors are behaving at present. I find that most of the writers who differ with me are perfectly reckless of the effect of their statements on the war provided only they can damage me for my insufferable airs of intellectual superiority and my reduction to dust and ashes of most of their oracular utterances. For example, they are shrieking that Com-

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

mon Sense About the War is a declaration that the Germans are in the right; that England has no case; that I am a pro-Prussian; that I ought to be shot; that I should have been shot if I had done as much in Germany; that the Censor ought to be shot for allowing such traitorous stuff to be published; and that if we are defeated it will be my doing. Now even if all this were true, no man with an ounce of consideration for his country as distinguished from his wounded personal vanity would make it known. From the clamor I must conclude that I am a writer of some importance. A quite considerable number of people, on learning that I am pro-Prussian, will conclude that this war is an unjustifiable one, and will refuse to enlist or subscribe or help in any way. The Germans, instead of quoting my words, will quote the statements that I am on their side, with the obvious comment that the British cause must be indeed bad when her own writers disown it, and desire to see her brought under the ennobling influence of German rule. Some stupid emigrant who has taken up the pro-Prussian cry against me in America says that the Germans are already doing this. Now there is no reason why an American paper should not be eager to tell the world that I am on the Prussian side, as many Americans are on it themselves. But that English editors should immediately seize on the statement; import it; spread it; endorse it; seems to me explicable only on the ground that they are so furious with me for being strongly anti-idiot that they care not how much they help the Germans and damage the British provided they can discredit me, even with the printed page open before the nation to convict them of falsehood. It seems hard that I must not only write common sense for our editors, but teach them how to review it in sufficiently abusive terms without playing into the hands of the enemy. However, here are a few assorted suggestions.

FOR INSTANCE

Mr Shaw, exaggerative and uneasily self-conscious as usual, offers a very superfluous defence of Great Britain's action in stemming the ambitious designs of the Teuton conspiracy against

NONSENSE ABOUT NEUTRALITY

us. The note of the demagogue is audible throughout; but it may appeal to some tastes; and his conclusion that the war must be pushed vigorously to a decisive triumph for this country and its allies, though trite, is sound.

OR

This putrid sophist, whose craze for notoriety at any cost, and unscrupulous thirst for money, is well known at the office of this paper, on the critical staff of which he was once glad to serve at a salary so modest that there can be no doubt that his present opulence (he pays supertax on three millions) is founded on the bribes he extorted from the wretched musicians whom he scarified mercilessly in our columns, now comes forward to demonstrate that there is a strong democratic case against the Kaiser. We never had a doubt of the justice of England's cause until we read this banal announcement.

OR

We do not always see eye to eye with Mr Bernard Shaw; and we must confess that he seems to us merely ridiculous when he launches into the deep waters of foreign policy and measures his mind against that of such a master of diplomacy as Sir Edward Grey. But there is much in his contention—not original, by the way—that Germany, put into the scale against Britain, kicks the beam. His pamphlet is brightly written, and reminds us in several passages of Fanny's First Play.

OR

The fact that Shaw's Common Sense About the War is a product of German gold is well known; but so wretched is the judgment of Attila in choosing his tools that we have rarely read a more damning indictment of Prussia than that which was intended by its clumsy author to be a fulsome flattery of his Imperial employer.

OR

Strange, that this inveterate *frondeur*, who for eight years has

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

reviled the most Liberal Government known to history as an ignorant and tyrannical oligarchy, and who, whilst admitting—as who can deny?—the many amiable qualities of that great Minister Sir Edward Grey, has not hesitated to describe him as having rather less aptitude for diplomacy than a jerboa has for lawn tennis, should now be found among the most earnest supporters of our glorious war, which a Grey alone could have brought about! Saul is indeed among the prophets. He has found the road to Damascus.

OR

Bernard Shaw has declared against Germany. Now we shant be long.

OR

It is to be regretted that Mr Shaw, whose splendid abilities we have always recognized in spite of his vanity and bad taste, should have marred an able presentation of the democratic case for the war by trivial disparagements of our Ministers which cannot fail to create an unfavorable impression in Berlin, where they have hitherto been regarded with the deepest admiration and respect. Already some of the less reputable Berlin papers have begun to express doubts of the *bona fides* of our Secretary for Foreign Affairs; and such extraordinary suspicions can clearly have no other source than the mischievous suggestions of Mr Shaw. That such suggestions should have been allowed to appear is a fresh proof of the uselessness of the Censorship, which should be at once tightened up so as to render such occurrences impossible in the future.

OR

That callous clown, Bernard Shaw, who takes a malign delight in distracting our attention from the unbearable horrors which threaten us, and laughs at the handless and eyeless victims of the Hun in the very faces of English mothers who are sending their sons to the front, now tries to curry favor with the rabble by clamoring for a decisive defeat of our enemies in a pamphlet filled

NONSENSE ABOUT NEUTRALITY

with the grossest sedition against our ally the Tsar. What are the authorities doing? Why is this ape still at large?

But I am afraid my sample notices are already out of date. I am almost taken aback at the rapidity with which the explosion of my Commonsense has cleared the air. Mr Churchill at Liverpool has boldly avowed our war policy of 1911, when Mr Lloyd George appeared in shining armor and frightened Germany out of the field. Mr Balfour has made a recruiting speech on the largest and frankest lines without the help of the Scrap of Paper. Mr Bonar Law has avowed the fact that on the 2nd August, when the Government was still hesitating, he and Lord Lansdowne, in the name of the Unionist party, declared that "it would be fatal to the honor and security of the United Kingdom to hesitate in supporting France and Russia, and offered their unhesitating support to the Government" for war. Not a word about Belgium. Lord Northcliffe's papers have gone right over to my side, and are publishing special pamphlets to claim their share in the long agitation for war with Germany which, a month ago, was denounced as a monstrous invention of my own. Everywhere the notes of the harmonium are dying away; and the trumpet and drum are stirring us all up. Snivelling is no longer the order of the day; and I find myself, to my alarm, something of a Jingo hero. Like the child in the story who said that the king was naked whilst the courtiers were pretending to admire his imaginary robes, I have blown the gaff with a word. The editorial columns of the papers are becoming positively readable.

As to my conclusions, nobody from the first has dissented from them. All the screams were those of the self-righteousness and hypocrisy I had lashed. I have been asked why I did it so cruelly. Well, I did not intend to be cruel; and I am still astonished at my own moderation. But I intended to be effective. I remembered Mr Rudyard Kipling's Recessional: the same warning, the same rebuke, nobly and tenderly done. With the result, if you please, that all the self-righteous people and all the hypo-

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

crites just wallowed in it, and calmly read "lest we forget" as "lest we remember." I made up my mind then that if ever I had occasion to take on Mr Kipling's job, I would set to work in another fashion. And I am glad to say that there has been no mistake this time. That is my excuse for any little passing irritation I may have caused.

CHAPTER V

THE CASE AGAINST GERMANY

My anxiety as to neutral foreign opinion, including German opinion in the United States, brought me into sharp conflict with the recklessness of our patriotic agitators, who were unable to conceive that any other point of view than their own, except that of the enemy, could exist. Their attacks on me did not matter: they were part of the sport of controversy; and I easily found stunning counters for all their blows. But their extravagances were mischievous abroad; for there is nothing so repulsive to a foreigner as self-righteous patriotism. We now think of the war as one in which Italy and the United States were our allies. But they were not so at first. Italy was fairly safe; for though she hesitated to come in against her old enemy Austria it was at least certain that she could not come to Austria's rescue against us. Still, she was hesitating: one felt that she was in the market, and that her aid could be bought by the cession to her of the Italian Tyrol through a rectification of her northern frontier, which, as it stood, was as gross an insult to ethnography as the present one is in the opposite sense. Italy was holding out for her price; and had Austria been wise enough to pay it, it would have been the worse for us. As for the United States, a book by von Bernhardi which had a sensational vogue here at the beginning of the war because it made no secret of the fact that Germany had to prepare for war with us, postulated an alliance with the United States as indispensable to success; and though nobody else seemed to notice this, I thought it so weighty that I began pleading more or less directly to the overseas jury without regard to the feelings of the thoughtless ranters who, before compulsory service became inevitable, spent their days in Trafalgar Square trying to persuade their audiences to enlist. Naturally, I infuriated some of them to such an extent that an American wit described the war as a struggle between the British Empire and Bernard Shaw. This simplification brought the business within

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

their mental range, I suppose. But such trifling with wholesale death and destruction strained my good humor to breaking point and occasionally beyond.

By the way, I interfered once in the Trafalgar Square business. Passing by one day, I found some ferociously bellicose clergymen tearing their throats out in denunciation of the villainy of the Germans and the dastardly cowardice of all the young men present who did not enlist on the spot. Their eloquence had produced only two recruits; and these two, duly posted on the plinth of Nelson's monument as heroic examples to British youth, were a couple of deplorable down-and-outs so obviously untouchable that it was plain to me that no decent young man would be seen in their company. I went home and wrote to Lord Derby, who was in command of the recruiting, urging him to dress up his smartest young soldiers as civilians, with instructions to spend their days in the square joining up ostentatiously again and again as really attractive examples, care being taken at the same time to hurry away all unpleasant-looking heroes to barracks before their appearance could act as a deterrent. Lord Derby at once offered me the post of Trafalgar Square stage manager; but I had other fish to fry, and had to excuse myself from this job: the only one offered me in those days of voluntary service.

The following letters are concerned with foreign opinion.

THE GERMAN CASE AGAINST GERMANY

(*From The New Age, 25th May 1916*)

It is often rashly assumed that Germans who have left Germany are not only Germans, but pro-Germans. Now it would be much safer to assume that if they were pro-Germans they would have stayed in their fatherland. It is only the Irishman whose enthusiasm for his birthplace increases as the square of his distance from it. Germany is a very accessible country; and there is nothing to prevent a man who likes it, and can speak the language, from settling in it. If, under these circumstances, he

THE CASE AGAINST GERMANY

chooses to remain in, for example, America, it is reasonable to conclude that he prefers American institutions, and will take the Republican side against the Imperial side when the two come into conflict.

But as war has the effect of throwing men back into their primitive phases, the reasoner who in peace may prefer the President to the Kaiser may in war time find himself exulting in a victorious charge of the Prussian Guard upon the Republican troops of France. Even as a reasoner he may think the Prussian system, though irksome to him personally, a capital thing for other people. Or he may think that, bad as it is, it is better than the Russian system. Or he may think that, good or bad, it is going to win. Or he may think that the English do not deserve to win, because they are Philistines and jobbers and muddlers, whilst the Germans stand for art and ideas and order. Or, considering local government that is good in practice more important than central government that is good only in theory, he may support the Germans because their local government is so superior to anything of the kind in England or the United States. Or he may be exasperated by British command of the sea, with its glorious unconsciousness that any right-minded neutral ship-owner or skipper could possibly object to be held up and mulcted in harbor dues, and then refused coal to take him home when he is going peacefully about his legitimate affairs, even when his cargo is not seized as contraband. There are, in short, dozens of considerations which may induce a German immigrant to overcome his dislike of Germany and become a pro-German.

I therefore venture to state the case against Germany as it might appeal to a German escaped from Germany, and even to a German still in the bondage of the Prussian system. I am fortunate enough to be able to do so without having to disclaim the electioneering and recruiting case put forward by the British Government, having made the Kaiser a handsome present of it before the war was four months old. I was vehemently abused for doing so; but those who abused me have since gone to such frantic lengths in denouncing our conduct of the war that my

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

criticisms and candors now read more like an apology for the British Cabinet and the British General Staff than an attack on them.

We hear no more about the sacredness of treaties, save from our incorrigible Foreign Secretary, who is still "as in 1914"; the cathedral of Rheims is not spoken of since we came within an ace of bombarding the Acropolis to force Greece to relax her neutrality; we made it as clear that we would, if necessary, batter our way into Salonika, as the Germans did that they would batter their way to Antwerp; we were glad that the Greeks had learned the lesson of German frightfulness too well to dare more than a formal protest when we annexed their islands for the duration of the war; we reviled American neutrality and Bulgarian intervention in one breath; our papers reprint with loud boastings and "I told you so's" their ancient clamors for war against Germany (after abusing me for saying that as far as shaking the mailed fist went it was a case of six of one and half a dozen of the other); we have superseded the commanding officers who were the Cæsars and Napoleons of the beginning of the war, and broken up the Government which we were all to support as a united nation until the hour of victory; we have declared and proved that we were prepared to the last rope in the navy and the last button on the tunics of our promised expeditionary force for the fight which we swore had taken us utterly by surprise in a pastoral dream of peace: in short, there is not a rag left of the official case whose collapse I foresaw, and whose exposure I anticipated, whilst the real case against Germany stands exactly as I stated it, and is now the only case that anyone has the face to plead on the side of the Allies.

It seems, then, that our striking of moral attitudes was a mistake, and that in unceremoniously upsetting the attitudinizers I was performing a public service, easy enough to anyone with some foresight, some self-possession, some student's knowledge of war, and some understanding of human nature. I neither expected nor received any gratitude from those I upset; but the outcry of pro-German raised against me at least enables me to

THE CASE AGAINST GERMANY

address myself to the Germans without being suspected of classing them as genetically inferior to the English, the French, the Italians, the Bulgarians, the Japanese, and even the damned in hell.

Like all who have seen Germany with their own eyes, who are deeply interested in science and art, and who are constitutionally impatient of anarchy, muddle, and disorder, I rate German civilization far above British civilization at many points; and I quite understand why many Englishmen who know Germany, and whose social opinions are *echt* Junker opinions, hail this war as a means of forcing England to adopt the Prussian system, which they worship as no German, with his practical experience of it, can worship it. Such enthusiasms are not expressed in the newspapers, and do not prevent those who hold them from taking the most energetic part in the war; but they are quite freely expressed in private discussions of political ideals. Their exponents are under no illusion as to this being a war of Virtue against Villainy: they know it to be a case of diamond cut diamond; and their only fear is that the Prussian diamond may prove the harder. And I do not know a single person, and indeed doubt whether there exists west of the Carpathians a single native person who believes that the overthrow of German civilization by Russian or Turkish or Serbian civilization would be a step forward in social evolution.

What, then, is the case against Germany?

It is, briefly, that all its organization, all its education, all its respect for ideas, all its carefully nourished culture, have somehow failed to secure for it either a government fit to be trusted with the tremendous mechanical power its organization has produced, or even a military and naval staff either representative of high German civilization or capable of effectively controlling its own officers.

What is the explanation of this and of other similar German paradoxes? I have admitted that German local government is very superior to English local government. Its organization, its foresight, its public spirit, all due to its skilful combination of

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

educated well-to-do municipal statesmanship with the primitive criticism of the poorer common vestryman, who knows where the shoe pinches, put us to shame. BUT the infant mortality of Germany is higher than that of England. That is the damning answer to the claims of the German professors for the superiority of German *Kultur*. The famous Empress Augusta's House for children in Berlin is a wonder; but the children would be far safer in a Connaught cabin. And it is so in other departments. The German system of training and selecting men seems far more thorough than ours; yet the men who secure the commanding posts are not those born to command.

The truth is that a corrupt Government in control of a highly organized system is much more dangerous than a corrupt Government muddling along with hardly any system. Now the German Government is frankly and hopelessly corrupt because it puts the power and reputation of a family, and of the class of which that family is the head, before every other consideration. It desires the good of the people provided that the good be wrought by the Hohenzollerns, and includes maintenance of the Hohenzollerns on the throne as the supreme good. It desires the efficiency of the army provided the army be officered by the Junker class, and be primarily efficient as a servile retinue for that class. It provides the best organized and equipped, the cheapest, and the most numerous universities in the world; but it orders a professor of history, on pain of dismissal, to write a treatise proving that it was the Kaiser's grandfather and not Bismarck who achieved the unity of Germany and outwitted and defeated Denmark, Austria, and France. The students are not instructed: they are infatuated.

If the University of Berlin appoints as *Privatdozent* the ablest mathematician available, and the Kaiser drives him out because he is also a Social-Democrat, which means no more in Potsdam than that he holds opinions which are a matter of course to every American, not only the mathematical school of Berlin University, but every other school in it, will become second rate, owing to the impossibility of finding eminence in the liberal arts com-

THE CASE AGAINST GERMANY

bined in the same person with idolatry of crowns and uniforms. If promotion is denied in the army to the officer who at the annual manœuvres either actually defeats the forces of the Kaiser or Crown Prince, or expresses his professional opinion that their tactics would in real warfare have involved the annihilation of an army corps, then there will be no Napoleons nor Lees in high command when real war breaks out. If officers are not only allowed to strike their men, but, when a terrified young soldier attempts to escape by flight on discovering that he has accidentally omitted a salute, may actually murder him on the spot without any heavier penalty than a few months quite agreeable confinement in a fortress, with the prospect of receiving complimentary messages and a shortening of the sentence from the Kaiser, it is impossible that even the company officers should not be demoralized. If murderous duelling (not of the harmless French sort) is forced on officers and on men of their rank by the court, through a social boycott in which the women of the family are compelled to take part as the victims or the executioners, no routine or schooling or endowment of art can possibly produce a real modern culture comparable to that of England or America.

Now, to the American, to the Britisher, to the Irishman, to the French Republican, all this is not merely barbarism: it is paranoid insanity. It has developed, not from the needs of human society, but because at a certain stage of social integration the institution of standing armies gave monarchs the power to play at soldiers with living men instead of leaden figures, and unluckily a craze for such play was a symptom of the mental overbalance of Peter the Great and Frederick the Great's father. This craze is the comparatively presentable end of a neurosis which cannot even be mentioned at the unpresentable end. When you reach the point at which an omission to salute an officer is treated as an offence which all but justifies murder, whilst at the same time practices which in republican and democratic countries are thought too repulsive to be discussed are officially tolerated and even encouraged, your culture has evidently taken a wrong turn-

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

ing, and must be headed back into the main human road with such violence as may be necessary.

Now let us not pretend that all these perversities are any more acceptable to a normal German than to a normal Englishman or American. Let us not deny that they are as rampant in England and France as the more democratic constitutions and consciences of those countries allow them to be. But that is just the difference. Both England and France, like the United States, have paid the price of a revolution to get rid of the *Roi Soleil* system, or at least to bring the artificial sun god so completely under parliamentary control that English Mr Asquith is unable to conceive how impotent the Reichstag is, and in the House of Commons speaks of Herr Bethmann-Hollweg addressing "his fellow deputies" as if the German Chancellor were an elected person. The Germans offered this price in 1848, but did not carry the transaction through; and the constitutional position of the Kaiser is accordingly nearer to that of Louis XIV and Charles I, or even Henry VIII, than of George V or President Poincaré.

Why do the Germans stand it? Certainly not out of love for Prussia and the Hohenzollerns: Prussia and its royal family are no more sentimentally popular in the other kingdoms of the German Empire than Dublin Castle is in the County Cork. Yet German unity is unassailable: the English publicists who think that the cohesion of the German kingdoms is as feeble as it was when Thackeray ridiculed the Court of Pumpernickel, and that the revived Holy Roman Empire will fall to pieces at the dictation of the Allies, are mistaken. The German support of Prussia is a recent support based on the practical experience of the individual German that under Prussian leadership the Germans, once the butts of Europe, have become the most feared and respected people in the world; that German commerce has made strides that have left even England gasping; and that wherever the German goes he finds employment more easily than the native, because it is assumed that he is a more competent man. Above all, he believes in Prussian military efficiency as the centre and model of all the rest so that not even the German Social-Democrats have

THE CASE AGAINST GERMANY

ever opposed compulsory military service, though every year in the Reichstag they have had to expose a sickening list of abuses of military discipline.

Yet I submit to the Germans that this war has proved that the Prussian system and the Hohenzollern idolatry do not make for either military efficiency or the diplomatic efficiency without which the control of a big military machine is as dangerous as a loaded pistol in the hands of a child or a fool. Let me illustrate my position by a few examples.

Take the case of the idiot who sank the Lusitania. His exploit would have paid the Allies very handsomely if they had bribed him with a million to do what he did gratuitously out of sheer folly. Indeed, had the Germans disclaimed the deed and maintained that the torpedo was a British one, launched by Mr Churchill's order for the sake of prejudicing the cause of Germany with the United States, it would have been hard to discredit so plausible a story. But it is the weakness of class despotism that its credit and its strategy are at the mercy of the most foolish of its recognized members and agents, because it must never admit that it is fallible at any point. Whatever avalanche of objurgation the Imperial Chancellor may have hurled down on the responsible offender in private, to have disowned him in public, or even withheld from the submarine captain the rewards of conspicuous service, would have implied that a Prussian official can be a blunderer of the first stupidity. What use is it for the Hohenzollern to be infallible if he cannot convey his infallibility to all his delegates? Once admit that a Prussian officer can err, and he drops at once to the prosaic level of General Joffre, the son of a cooper, and General Robertson, promoted from the ranks. The bigger his blunder, the more necessary to proclaim it a masterstroke. And as the silliest Junker officer has brains enough to discover that no matter what he does he must be officially supported when his exploit is too sensational to be concealed, he does sensational things which, even if successful, would gain from General Joffre the order of the boot.

Take again the monstrous diplomatic blunder which has put

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Germany so hopelessly in the wrong and hemmed her in with formidable enemies on every side. In 1870, when the European atmosphere was still overwhelmingly Liberal, and Barbarossa and Frederick the Great and the Holy Roman Empire were romantic dreams of the past even to the King of Prussia, Bismarck not only conquered France, but contrived to do it in so correct a fashion that it was quite impossible for England or any other Power to come to the rescue of France without gross indecency. People say now that we should have thrown in our lot with France in 1870; but how could we? France had wantonly broken the peace of Europe by suddenly raising the frantic cry of "*à Berlin*," and attacking her neighbor without a pretence of having any ends to serve but those of the Buonaparte dynasty. Germany was victorious and had the sympathy of the world as well; and Bismarck said that the German lieutenant was the wonder of the world. It was on the strength of that victory and sympathy that the present Kaiser, having got rid of Bismarck, substituted for his shrewd realism the idolatrous romance of Hohenzollernism, with the result that the wonderful German lieutenant began to figure at Zabern and Wittenberg and elsewhere as a very common sort of blackguard, and in spite of the warnings of Bernhardi, the Kaiser landed the Central Empires in a ruinous war by repeating, not the success of Bismarck, but the blunder of Napoleon.

He could, as events have since proved, have beaten Russia in a square fight with her if he had waited for her attack. Had France then struck him in the back—an outrage to which it would have been hard to reconcile French public opinion—at least England, America, and Italy must have remained neutral and sympathetic. At worst he would have had to fight two first-rate Powers; yet he not only contrived to bring four into the field against him, but played his hand with America, which contained some trumps which I must not point out to him, in an insane fashion which not only makes it impossible for the United States to take his part, but might have led to their joining the Allies in spite of the ingrained British junkerism of Sir Edward Grey (who should

THE CASE AGAINST GERMANY

long ago have offered President Wilson guarantees against the danger that is most likely to make America hesitate), but for the reaction which has followed the shooting of the republican prisoners in Dublin.

Now, all this blundering is not military efficiency, but quite the opposite. The Prussian Junkers, like all stupid Junkers who are not rich, are very industrious, very exact, and very determined to do their best; so when they come in conflict with British Junker stupidity, which, being much too rich, has neither industry nor method, they shine as organizers. But what is the use of that without republican common sense behind it? It was perfectly correct to shoot Miss Cavell: she had committed what is by military law a capital offence, and a flagrant instance of it at that; and she seems to have had her case carefully tried and her complicity proved. But would any commandant with the brains of a rabbit have outraged neutral popular sentiment by having her shot, instead of locking her up until the end of the war, after passing a formal sentence of imprisonment for life? Even General Maxwell had more sense than to shoot the Countess Markievicz. Take the whole case of Belgium. Everyone who knows anything of war admits that when a country is invaded, and an army finds itself amid a people to whom the killing of an invader is not only no crime but an act of patriotism, nothing but a reign of terror can protect that army. It has always been so: Roberts in Afghanistan and South Africa was no more able to avoid it than the conquerors of Louvain. But would any commanders responsible to democracy, or any General Staff not so intoxicated with idolatry as to imagine that Western public opinion could be imposed on by the rhodomontade of Timour the Tartar, have advertised this horrible necessity as the Prussian officers did? Were the pompous noodles who proclaimed that men who refused to touch their hats to German subalterns must be treated as mad dogs are treated in any sense efficient? Really efficient officers might have burned Brussels and Antwerp to the ground and killed every soul in them with less obloquy than these Junker officers incurred for Germany by burning a few streets in Louvain.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

There are places of which not one stone has been left on another by our guns; but nobody has been made indignant about it. I raise no question of humanity: war suspends humanity except as a political element that must be considered when the belligerents are surrounded by a precarious neutrality that may at any moment become an active hostility. But efficiency, which is the supreme military consideration, includes a very vigilant and direct regard for that political element, and a careful study of the narrow limits within which reprisals do less harm than good. And it seems to me a mere flying in the face of notorious facts to maintain that Hohenzollernism has produced this vital kind of efficiency in a greater degree than the French Republican system. Prussian efficiency is the efficiency of organized mechanical destructiveness, of big battalions and recklessness of their lives, of high explosives and recklessness of their effects, of blind duty and unreasoning idolatry of King and country, and of the industry that leaves men too tired to think and too confident of having earned gratitude to notice that they may not have deserved it. But there is no lack of this sort of efficiency in the French Army; and there will be no lack of it in the American Army when America has an army. In fact you will have more of it than the Prussians have; for the more democratic your army is the more ruthlessly are officers superseded for inefficiency. If the Crown Prince were simply a French or American citizen soldier, he would have incentives to efficiency that do not exist for him at present. The guns that smashed Liège were good guns; but they were late; and the delay probably lost the war for Germany.

I must not labor the point further. I submit that there is no case for the alleged superlative military efficiency of the Prussian system, and a very strong one against it. I submit that it is necessarily an anti-German system because it is an anti-human system. I submit that whilst the pretensions of German culture and civilization are respectable and to a great extent sound, the pretensions of the Hohenzollern family and of the Junker caste are humbug, and that by putting the humbug before the civilization the civilization has been imperilled and must finally become itself a humbug.

THE CASE AGAINST GERMANY

I am perfectly aware that monarchical principles are more completely realized by the Government of Germany than republican principles are by the Governments of France and America, and that the Kaiser might with some justification ask me whether I believe that there is really more humbug about his divine right than about political liberty, equality, and fraternity, as they are now practised. I can reply only that it is possible to make France, America, and even England, into real republics, but that it is eternally impossible to make every male Hohenzollern in the direct line a god, or even to guarantee that he would be capable of rising above the rank of a private or managing a whelk stall successfully if he were plain Pitou or Jack or Jonathan.

When the republics of the earth rise up and their Presidents take counsel together the Kings will have to go: that much would be plain even if the question were only one of common humanity; for I know nothing, short of Chinese monster-making, so cruel as bringing up a child to be a King. And I conclude that, as the German emigrants must agree with me or they would not have emigrated, they are, by just so much as they are cleverer than a mere benighted American or Britisher, more eager than we are to see the downfall of what we loosely call Prussian militarism, though it is really only a lazy, romantic, and rather sheepish idolatry of a not very strong-headed family who would never dream of being better than their neighbors if they had not been perversely brought up to that sort of somnambulism among a people naturally the least military in Europe.

PROPAGANDA IN ITALY

(*From The Times, 16th Dec. 1914*)

SIR: Mr Richard Bagot's proposal to distribute in Italy half a million (why only half a million?) pamphlets setting forth the official reasons why Great Britain is at war with Germany is evidently worth considering; but I venture to suggest that what we want to disseminate in Italy and on neutral ground elsewhere are not the official reasons why we are at war with Germany, but the

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

real reasons why the neutral nations should support our side in that war with their sympathy if not with their active intervention later on. I say "our side" advisedly; for it is obvious that the neutral nations are concerned with the case for supporting France and Russia quite as much as with the case for supporting us. Indeed, what we want to impress on them is not so much any national case as the world's case for destroying the military prestige of the Prussian system, which means destroying the system itself, as it has no other asset.

Besides, we have at least two official cases, each addressed to a section of our own people, and only one of them at all interesting to foreigners. The first, addressed to our governing classes, who mostly uphold the old and famous diplomacy which has won so many victories for Britain since it was begun by William of Orange two centuries ago, presents us as a warlike and powerful nation undertaking the championship of the world against the Prussian system, and, by superior strategy, securing not only the choice of the moment most unfavorable to the enemy for giving battle, but massing against him the greatest odds possible in the European situation. Now this case, put by Mr Balfour, Mr Churchill, and in your own columns, is the case that will appeal to the numerous and influential people in all neutral countries who back the winner or have reason to dread his disfavor.

The second official case is addressed to the English electorate, largely composed of persons who have (very naturally) a horror of war and no grasp of foreign policy, with, as far as the supporters of the present Government are concerned, a tradition that non-intervention is the correct thing. What these very worthy people want is excuses for the war, and assurances that we are an unsuspecting, peaceful, unprepared, shopkeeping sort of people, unexpectedly forced to defend ourselves against an act of brutal aggression by a foreign Power addicted to the worship of Odin and his prophet, the Nietzschean Anti-Christ. Now this may catch the votes of the Free Churches effectively enough at the next election; but it is of no use for foreign consumption. In fact, it is highly mischievous; for those who believe it conclude that Ger-

THE CASE AGAINST GERMANY

many is stronger, braver, and craftier than we; and those who do not believe it are irritated at what seems to them a clumsy attempt to practise on their credulity. If anyone doubts this, I advise him to read the articles by which the Germans are trying to influence American opinion in their favor. They are written by Germans to please Germans, and by courtiers to please "their noble Kaiser." The writers are simple enough to think that what will please the Germans and the Kaiser will please the Americans. They are so completely mistaken that, if the German subsidies fail to keep up their press campaign, it will be well worth our while to come to their rescue with a liberal contribution of secret service money.

But are we ourselves less likely to make this mistake than the Germans? Is there not a serious danger that if we issue the half million leaflets demanded by Mr Bagot they will prove extremely gratifying and convincing to us here at home, whilst leaving their Italian readers either cold or irritated, if not hostile? I should no doubt be accused of paradox were I to say that the less likely a pamphlet on the war is to please an Englishman, the more likely it is to influence an Italian in our direction; but I will say without hesitation that if nine-tenths of the stuff that the British public passionately demanded from its Press during the first six weeks of the war could be reprinted and spread broadcast through the neutral nations, we should presently have to face a world in arms.

It is not enough for Mr Bagot to demand "a pamphlet printed in Italian." Who is to write the pamphlet? and what is the pamphlet to say? I suggest that it should be written, not by some gentleman at the Foreign Office, but by an Italian with a sincere love of his country (not necessarily of ours), and a conviction that an Austro-Prussian hegemony would be worse for Italy than the nearest approach to a hegemony a Franco-Russian combination could achieve. He should, as to the causes of the war, say just exactly nothing. To the commercial and governing classes of Italy he should urge that events have proved (see the Yellow Book) that we hold the balance of power as between the Alliance and the Entente, and that since we have thrown our practically inexhaustible resources so effectively, and in point of time so

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

judiciously, against Prussia, Italy has only to await the result in a friendly attitude to find herself placed in a far stronger position as to Austria and Turkey (plus Germany) than she occupied before the war. To ask her to join us would be a blunder: she must settle that for herself without obviously interested advice. And to the Italian masses, with their loathing of Potsdam discipline, he should appeal against the Kaiser as the apostle of a system which destroys human happiness and popular liberty without even justifying itself as better for fighting purposes than the voluntary system of England or the comparatively easy-going Republicanism of France. Such a document, appealing on the one hand to the glory of aristocratic patriotic tradition, and on the other to democratic indignation, hope, and enthusiasm, would do no harm and might do us considerable service.

If we cannot produce it, we had better leave Press propaganda to the Germans, because they are not doing it well. Their system does not encourage the sort of writer who does such work well. They deal in excuses, denials, recriminations, and statements which they believe solely because they want to believe them. That is all very well for home consumption: we do a good deal of it ourselves for that market; but as an export line it helps the enemy. Still, if we can produce the right thing, there is no reason why Mr Bagot should not have his pamphlets until our success in the field becomes decisive, which is the best propaganda of all.

CHAPTER VI

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

I WILL now, by the way of comic relief, give some examples of the extremes to which the pretence that the war was an unprovoked and savage attack on us carried clever and educated men in their generous indignation. At first the moral cases trumped up to exhibit us as angels and the Germans as demons were so far reasonable that the deeds imputed to the enemy as evidence of his guilt were at least delinquencies. But we soon reached a point at which this was no longer necessary, as the most innocent actions seemed to us to become horrible crimes when they were done by Germans, or, worse still, pro-Germans, a pro-German being any person who kept his head amid the prevailing lunacy. For instance, here is a review of a publication which made a sensation early in 1915 as a damning proof of the wickedness of the enemy.

THE GERMAN WAR BOOK AND THE BRITISH LIMIT¹

(*From The New Statesman, 13th March 1916*)

I must really, as an honest reviewer, warn the public against the pretences on which this book has been placed on the market. I opened it with eager anticipations of having my blood raised to boiling point by a manual of such cynical perfidy and cruelty as only the stony heart and brazen forehead of the Prussian enemy could set down in print for the horror and execration of all good Britons. The publishers promised me, on the very jacket of the book, to make my flesh creep. Professor Morgan has padded the volume with fifty pages of expiation on its infamy. Thus primed, I skipped large and quite interesting chunks of the Pro-

¹ The German War Book, being "The Usages of War on Land" issued by the Great General Staff of the German Army. Translated, with a critical Introduction, by J. H. Morgan, M.A., Professor of Constitutional Law at University College, London. John Murray.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

fessor so as to get to the Prussian monstrosity as fast as possible. And what did I find?

Suppose a policeman were to wake you up at night to tell you that he had found a burglar of the most repulsive appearance, crime-stained, cross-eyed, bullmouthed, crouching in your coal cellar. And suppose on hastening downstairs to give the loathsome ruffian in charge, you found the Dean of Westminster, irreproachably dressed, waiting for you in your drawing room. That will give you an idea of how completely sold I was when I read the German War Book. I declare before heaven and earth that it might be one of the publications of the S.P.C.K. It would be perfectly in its place in the Encyclopædia Britannica. Offered to a parish magazine it would be rejected as not lively enough. My favorite writer on military subjects is Sir Mark Sykes; but I find Colonel Maude and Major Stewart-Murray stimulating and entertaining; and the eulogistic notices in which The Daily Mail used to praise Major Stewart-Murray as a disciple of "the great Clausewitz" have lately taken on a fresh delight for me. I can imagine the scorn with which these British militarists will receive the Prussian War Book—the ribald but manly laughter with which they will dispose of its anxious correctness, its namby-pamby sentimentality, its careful respect for civilian and pacifist opinion, its scrupulous piety, and its constant appeals to chivalry. Do not the following passages almost call for an organ accompaniment?

"Chivalrous feelings, Christian thought, higher civilization and, by no means least of all, the recognition of one's own advantage, have led to a voluntary and self-imposed limitation, the necessity of which is to-day tacitly recognized by all States and their armies."

"Wide limits are set to the subjective freedom and arbitrary judgment of the commanding officer: the precepts of civilization, freedom, and honor will have to guide his decisions."

"As regards the personal position of the inhabitants of the occupied territory, neither in life nor in limb, in honor nor in freedom, are they to be injured; and every bodily injury due to

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

fraud or negligence, every insult, every disturbance of domestic peace, every attack on family honor and on morality, and, generally, every unlawful and outrageous attack or act of violence are just as strictly punishable as though they had been committed against the inhabitants of one's own land."

Could any gentleman say more? I will not quote the passages which deal with prisoners of war: let it suffice that no Englishman can read them without sincerely envying the lot of the soldier who falls into the hands of the enemy. Free postage, free carriage of presents, a committee to look after him, and an absolute exemption from lodgment in a prison or penal establishment of any sort are but drops in the brimming cup of his comforts and privileges.

The book is open to one criticism, and one only. It is that until we have armies of angels officered by saints and commanded by prophets and martyrs, the chances of its pious injunctions ever receiving much attention in actual warfare are hardly worth considering. They will most certainly not be carried out by us; and the Germans themselves have had to give them up as a bad job. Take for instance the following passage: "A prohibition by international law of the bombardment of open towns and villages which are not occupied by the enemy, or defended, was, indeed, put into words by The Hague Regulations, but appears superfluous, since modern military history knows of hardly any such case." Alas! it is but a few weeks since these good resolutions ended in a rain barrel in the innocent village of Heacham. The Germans dropped an incendiary bomb into it. In this they shewed a double want of judgment. In the first place a rain barrel is the last spot on earth that lends itself to the successful operation of an incendiary bomb. In the second, the bomb did effectually explode the notion that the Germans have a perfect system of espionage on our East Coast. If they had, they would have known that Mr Robert Blatchford lived just round the corner from that rain barrel, and that he is the sort of man to make more noise about a single bomb dropped in his own village than about a hundred dropped in Dunkirk, Düsseldorf,

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Freiburg and other towns where the women and children, being foreign, are conventionally assumed by us to be naturally bomb-proof. The bombarders of Heacham can only plead that a village occupied by Mr Blatchford can hardly be described as "not occupied by the enemy."

And here I would suggest to the authors of the German War Book that since the extension of war to the air has made an end of the notion that any place can now be considered undefended, it would be well to restate the case for civilian immunity from the modern point of view, which is, I take it, that whereas a bombardment of Woolwich, with its crowded streets of working people and their closely packed families, would be a horrible business, and could have no effect in inducing the governing classes, none of whom live in Woolwich or ever intend to live there, to make an end of the war and avoid wars in future, a single bomb neatly dropped into the grand stand at Goodwood at a suitable moment, and the systematic demolition of our country houses (not, of course, the Red Cross ones, where there are only common people and soldiers and middle-class professionals like nurses and doctors), of expensive pleasure resorts, and generally of all places in which two or three of our governing classes are likely to be gathered together, would produce more effect than the destruction of a thousand poor suburbs and the slaughter of all their unconsidered denizens. The hint need not be lost on our own commanders. Bomb-dropping on Essen and Cuxhaven leaves Germany cold: it does no harm that cannot be repaired by making the poor work overtime. But Homburg now—? I will not press the point: still, if we are really making war on Junkerdom, is it not common sense to aim our bombs at the Junkers?

But the indiscretion of these remarks shews how much more prudent it is not to write war books, however pious. For it is impossible to give any sort of practical advice to an army or to codify the usages of war without either dishonesty or atrocity. The German War Book pleads for chivalry and generosity to the verge of making itself ridiculous. It forces us to ask the authors bluntly whether the Germans suppose that omelettes can be

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

made without breaking eggs. Yet what does its anxious chivalry come to after all? The authors, being honest according to their lights, are compelled to admit that though they are bound to declare that the inhabitants of an invaded country should not be compelled to give information serviceable to the invaders, yet it is hopeless to expect that any mortal army will refrain from such compulsion. They say frankly that anything may, or at least will, be threatened or done if it promises to attain its military object; and Belgium be their witness that they were entirely right in their estimate of human nature under the test of war. Finally they sum the whole position up in what they call the double rule, which is that though "no harm must be done, not even the very slightest, which is not dictated by military considerations [Hear, hear! Fine Fellows!], every kind of harm may be done, even the very utmost, which the conduct of war requires, or which comes in the natural course of it" [Yah! Huns! Pirates! Child Killers! Shame!].

Before endorsing these execrations, please read the following quotations from British authorities quoted in the February supplement to the *Berliner Tageblatt*. They refer to something that happened in 1807. That was the last time our national independence was at stake in a European war; and its further relevance to the present situation is established by the fact that Major Stewart-Murray, in a war book—nominally a peace book, by the way—published in the present century with a preface by Lord Roberts, selects this very incident to shew that pacifist sentimentalities about international law are not war, and that when we suddenly bombarded and plundered the capital of a neutral country (Denmark) without declaring war, we were thoroughly justified by what the German Chancellor calls "a state of necessity," the plain implication at the time when Major Stewart-Murray's book was issued being that we should be acting strictly according to British precedent if we suddenly attacked and sank the German fleet without notice or declaration of war, as, from the militarist point of view, we no doubt ought to have done if public opinion would have stood it. The situation in 1807 was that Britain,

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

being at war with France and Russia, suddenly discovered that these two countries had secretly agreed to seize the fleets of the three neutral States of Denmark, Sweden, and Portugal, and with them to make good the losses suffered by the French navy in the battle of Trafalgar. The only way to prevent Napoleon doing this was to be beforehand with him; and accordingly Canning promptly sent out a fleet under Admiral Gambier and an army under General Cathcart to seize the Danish fleet before Napoleon could lay hands on it. The Danes naturally objected to surrender their fleet; and their objection was overcome by bombarding Copenhagen for three days. The Berliner Tageblatt quotes our official justifications of this *coup de main*, from the King's proclamation downwards. Here they are!

ROYAL PROCLAMATION. While He [the King] laments the cruel necessity which has obliged Him to have recourse to acts of hostility against a nation with which it was His Majesty's most earnest desire to have established the relations of common interest and alliance, His Majesty feels confident that in the eyes of Europe and the world the justification of His conduct will be found in the commanding and indispensable duty, paramount to all others among the obligations of a sovereign, of providing, while there was yet time, for the immediate security of his people.

MR LUSHINGTON. The first law of nature, the foundation of the law of nations, is the preservation of man. It is on the knowledge of his nature that the science of his duty must be founded. When his feelings point out to him a mighty danger, and his reason suggests the means of avoiding it, he must despise the sophistical trifler who tells him it is a moral duty he owes to others to wait till the danger break upon his foolish head, lest he should hurt the meditated instrument of his destruction. Upon this general principle of the law of nature and of nations I maintain the morality and certainly the necessity of the expedition against Copenhagen.

MR MILNES. He maintained that no law of nature could be violated by the measures taken by us to insure our own safety. It was the most flagitious of all descriptions of morality that would

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

allow the opportunity of self-preservation to pass by unimproved.

LORD PALMERSTON. Much has been said by a right honorable gentleman on the law of nations, on right and policy: he [Lord P.] was as ready and willing as any man to pay his tribute of respect to them, and to recommend their application whenever circumstances would permit it: he was afraid, however, that although much talked of, they were little understood: the consequence was that many people abused the terms and took one for the other. In the present instance he was glad to observe that we did not suspend them without necessity, or, in other words, that we used them in conformity to the law of nature, which dictated and commanded self-preservation.

FOREIGN SECRETARY GEORGE CANNING. Was it to be contended that in a moment of imminent danger and impending necessity we should have abstained from that course which prudence and policy dictated, in order to meet and avert those calamities that threatened our security and existence, because, if we sank under the pressure, we should have the consolation of having the authority of Puffendorf to plead?

MR PONSONBY (Opposition). No writer on the law of nations, or on any other law, or on common justice, had ever maintained that one Power could be justified in taking from another what belonged to it, unless a third Power meant and was able to take the same thing.

The Berliner Tageblatt simply adds: "Eines Kommentars werden diese Zitate nicht bedürfen." It cannot condemn Britain and Canning without condemning Germany and Bethmann-Hollweg. But it can and does put us in the same predicament. We cannot condemn Germany and Bethmann-Hollweg without condemning Britain and Canning. Let Mr Podsnap, at present distracting us from the serious work of beating the Germans by his blatant trumpetings of his own moral superiorities, take heedful note, and, in the happy phrase of Mr H. G. Wells, cease flapping his mouth on the foe.

The truth is, war, as between the belligerents, is a suspension of morality and religion and ethics and all the social command-

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

ments, just as it is a suspension of law and constitutional government within the belligerent countries; and this German War Book makes the best of it without dishonestly attempting to conceal the worst of it. The shrieks it has provoked only prove that many of our journalists have not the least notion of what war really is, and conceive it quite simply as a state in which it is glorious and heroic for Englishmen to shoot foreigners, but dastardly and murderous for foreigners to shoot Englishmen. They are very much in the mental condition of the late Duke of Cambridge, who is said to have had all his doubts as to the wisdom of the Crimean War swept away, and replaced by a furious hatred of the Russians, when he saw them firing at the Guards as callously as they were wont to fire at mere line regiments with whose messes the Duke did not dine. Even my glorious compatriot Sergeant O'Leary, whose portrait shews the remarkable forehead which enabled him to keep that long head of his whilst other men were losing theirs, and to attend to them dispassionately with a magazine rifle, seems from his letters to his family to be under the impression that "the Huns" behaved most reprehensibly in trying to slay the Irish Guards. Perhaps they did; but the reproach comes oddly from the slayer of a whole trenchful of them. A regiment of O'Learies would wipe out a German army corps: let us therefore applaud the heroism of the German troops who still confront the Irish Guards so devotedly. I daresay it is unpatriotic and pro-German of me; but I do think it a rotten thing to call men opprobrious names when they are fighting for their country for all they are worth.

I will not say that I wish the belligerents could learn to fight like gentlemen; for if we fight like gentlemen and sportsmen we shall be beaten by any nation which makes a serious business of killing us. That is how the French were beaten at Crécy and Poitiers. We are at present being driven to the last and meanest atrocity of war: the atrocity of starving our enemy. And we have driven the enemy to the villainy of hiding in the depths of the sea and torpedoing every keel that passes above. When it comes to that, we have both got pretty well down on the raw of necessity

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

and self-preservation. But at least I can express a wish that the civilians on both sides would fight with their pens as cleanly and good-humoredly and bravely as the soldiers do with their guns and bayonets. When Mr St John Ervine let fly the other day about "our cowardly press and our contemptible parliament" he gave a good many of our journalists and politicians no more than they deserved. To me and to many others not the least of the horrors of this war has been the degradation of that national literary staff whose duty it is to keep our public character up to the mark in emergencies. It is pitiable to see how some of us have succumbed to the strain. We have run about screaming with panic when the example of a stout countenance was of all things required from us. We have changed from humane, humorously self-possessed gentlemen to vituperative hysterical cads. Whatever standards we may have borne in the endless strife for civil liberty and justice, we have thrown them away and fallen on our knees in abject surrender at the first roar of the German cannon. Too many of the clergy have become a mere rabble of apostates, shrieking for blood. Professors unnerved and overstrained, have lacked even the lusty brutality of the Jingo clergy. Decent poets have scribbled hymns of hate, and tried to score music hall claptrap for the cornet and banjo. Responsible editors have written as if there were a mafficking mob under their windows ready to hang them at the first calm and masterful word, instead of a rather disgusted public—especially the enlisted public—wishing that somebody would talk a little sense. A thousand German spies and ten army corps within sight of London could not have dismayed us as much as the more terrified of our own compatriots have dismayed us. But there is no reason to suppose that these nerve cases are representative of the nation. Nobody is a penny the worse for their shrieking: the men who keep their heads also keep the attention of the people and come through the test of public meetings and press publicity triumphantly. The panic mongers are, so far, nowhere. In France the mobbing of Anatole France and the blacklisting of Puccini were despicable enough; but at least there was Clemenceau to hold the fort for free thought and free speech,

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

and Gustave Hervé, the most readable of the French journalists, to chaff himself and his friends in *La Guerre Sociale*, and, always debonair, to snap his fingers at the enemy instead of throwing mud that never reaches them. In Germany there is Maximilian Harden, whose common sense about the war, by forcing us to admit that the German spirit is still elate and formidable, frightens us more than the gibberings and clawings of all the delirious German professors and parsons and journalists who reassure us by going on like some of ours. What is happening in Russia I do not know, though there was some hope in the old joke, now stale, about England being resolved to fight to the last drop of Russian blood. You can always rally a nation while it has some wit left. America, to judge by some of its papers, is mad with British patriotism, Polish nationality, and Belgian freedom; but it is not for us to quarrel with them for this. More power to their elbows, say I, even though, like the young lady in *Fanny's First Play*, I cannot help smiling.

But the fact that others are as bad as we is not a brave man's consolation. I call on the scared fugitives from my profession to pull themselves together and quit themselves as manfully as the soldiers. It is useless for romantic literary men to tell me that I am incapable of understanding that war has ennobled them. I quite understand how easily our vanity persuades us that excitement is ennoblement. Patriotism, Love, and Drink are potent producers of that flattering illusion. I am not taken in, though I admit that a frightened man's anxiety for his skin may be sincerer and therefore better for him than a dilettante's anxiety about his soul and about the fine arts. It is not noble to rave abusively at your enemy (not to mention your friend) instead of "covering him steady" with the pen as Sergeant O'Leary did with the magazine rifle. The men who wrote this German War Book are more formidable than the men who have tried to tear it to pieces; and we should be in a bad way indeed if our own General Staff had not more sense and pluck than most of the book's reviewers. It is a quite useful, interesting, instructive, well written, honest book, telling the truth exactly as our soldiers would tell it; and the sooner we learn

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

to look facts in the face as its authors do, the sooner we shall be able to convince them that peace with us is better for them and the world than war.

This review, however, conveys no idea of how far we had lost our common sense. It is evident that its editor, though learned in constitutional history, had never read the Articles of War, or any ordinary military year book, and therefore did not know, nor even dream possible, the wickedness of war at its best. He had read this commonplace statement of that wickedness with the horror of a young Sunday school teacher reading Macchiavelli's Prince. And his readers were in the same condition of honorable innocence. But the two reviews which follow shew how the late Cecil Chesterton, then one of the brightest and cleverest of our young author-journalists, whose talents included a lively sense of humor, and whose qualifications included a keen interest in history, not only attacked Frederick the Great for profane jesting and for practising the ordinary duplicities of conquistadoresque diplomacy, as to both of which some moral criticism was in order, but denounced the late E. D. Morel for the most colorless commonplaces of human conduct, Morel having provoked him by telling the truth about the war with a bias which, though not in the least pro-German, was anti-French (Morel's father, a Frenchman, had married an Englishwoman who disliked French life and had returned to England when her husband's death left her with a son eight years old). I had to defend Morel vigorously. He was fighting at heavy odds against the prevalent ignorance of the diplomatic history of the war, under cover of which those who had planned it seemed likely to obtain a dangerous accession of credit and power as saviors of their country from destruction by a demoniacal foe; and I was as determined as he that they should not be thus glorified if I could help it.

I must add that Cecil Chesterton, a younger brother of the

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

great Gilbert, was on the most cordial personal terms with me, and remained so until his death from trench fever, one of those events which so often brought home with a personal stab the fundamental waste and folly of the whole miserable business. The Chestertons were by far the most striking examples of the anti-Prussian fury of the amiable people, because in their case innocence and amiability were combined with extraordinary literary ability and public spirit. Their fury was romantic and fundamentally playful, expressing itself mostly in splendidly readable pen-pictures of an absurdly fictitious conflict of Prussian paganism with a profound and elementary Christianity and sanity in the French peasantry, the moral being that it was our most sacred duty to help the French farmers to exterminate the Baltic heathen in defence of the Christendom they were menacing with destruction. It was interesting, ingenious, and very well written: in fact nothing was wrong with it except that it was obviously a Quixotic vision which could have been fitted on to any pair of nations on earth.

The congenitally friendly Chestertons, conscientiously acting their parts as haters to the death, gave what was to me a ludicrously unconvincing, but on that account entirely pardonable performance. Cecil, I think, enjoyed it more than Gilbert. When he visited me for the last time he was in khaki, a sturdy, jolly, deeply sunburnt, hopelessly unsoldierlike figure. Military discipline insists on smartness of dress and elegance of carriage; but Cecil, void of vanity, was incorrigibly careless as to what he wore or how he wore it; and his easy personality defied the sumptuary laws of the British barracks. The word camouflage was in everyone's mouth then; and though it was quite heartbreaking to think of his talent being risked under real gunfire, my unruly imagination instantly presented me with a picture of Cecil camouflaging himself as a beetroot on a sack of potatoes by simply standing stock still. "I have come here to tell you" he said "that it is not true that I have given up beer. I am told that beer will shorten my life by ten years; and I am prepared to pay that price cheerfully." It is impossible to describe what I used to feel on such occasions. It was

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

hard enough to see any young man thrown into the common heap of cannon fodder with only the inhuman military excuse that there were plenty of the same sort to replace him; but when the young man, possessing a rare and highly valuable talent, was not replaceable, one's hatred of the war bit fiercely in. However, there was nothing to be done but to keep his spirits up and my own wrath down, and to console myself with his statistical chances of coming back safe and sound. I wished he had left the job of being a military hero to the poor fellows who were not clever enough to be heroic at anything else; but it was not a point on which I could interfere with another man's conscience. So we parted gaily; and the next I heard of him was that he was dead of the war pestilence against which he was so ill fortified by his anti-Puritan contempt for my vegetarian diet.

During the first days of the war I was passing through Gower Street when a company of young volunteers who had rushed to the colors came swinging along. To my utter scandal I was seized with a boyish impulse to join them. Men technically as superannuated as myself did so: A. E. W. Mason, who had played for me in *Arms And The Man* twenty years earlier, was certainly more than, as he alleged, twenty-two; and when C. E. Montague's hair turned white in a single night in the trenches, it was not shell shock, but the impossibility of procuring relays of hair dye, which produced the phenomenon. I had to remind myself that I could be of much more use with my pen than with a bayonet, and that the courage of my own profession was likely to be tested at home quite as severely as the courage of the military profession (to which I make no pretension) before I felt quite safe from making a fool of myself. How then could I have disparaged the ardor of Cecil Chesterton, my junior by a generation, whose soul I had saved from Materialism by my Quintessence of Ibsenism?

But it is time to pass on to the reviews.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

CHESTERTONISM AND THE WAR¹

(From the *New Statesman*, 23rd January 1915)

Chestertonism in literature is curiously like Post Impressionism in painting. True, neither of the two men whose once precocious and still extraordinary literary ability makes their family name the most convenient and expressive term for a whole movement in modern journalism applaud Cézanne and Matisse, or spend rapturous afternoons in the Grafton Gallery (at least I have never met them there). Rather do they pose as jolly old English Philistines, and imply that Frith's Derby Day and the Christmas chromolithographs of Santa Claus are the only art for healthy souls. Yet they have done as Cézanne and Matisse have done. Being possessed, by nature and through practice, of a distinguished mastery of their art in its latest academic form, they, finding themselves intolerably hampered by so much ready-made reach-me-down thoughtstuff, have deliberately returned to primitive conditions so as to come in at the strait gate and begin at the beginning with all the knowledge of the men who begin at the end. Just as the Post Impressionists said "Unless you become as a cave man again, you can achieve nothing really alive in design and color" so the Chestertons, whilst retaining the technique of Scott, Dickens, and Macaulay, which they handle with careless ease, said to themselves "Unless we abjure Copernicus and Galileo and Bacon, and stand as little children on a flat earth with the floor of heaven above us, we shall never be anything fresher or better than a couple of walking Daily Telegraphs."

Of course the feat was beyond human power; and it was not thoroughly attempted: they disgorged Bacon readily enough, but could not give up Fielding and Dickens. Still, they have carried it as far as it is ever likely to be carried in our time by men who are capable of the most advanced modern thought, and are not

¹ The Prussian Hath Said in His Heart——. By Cecil Chesterton. Chapman & Hall. 2s.

The Kaiser's War. By Austin Harrison. George Allen & Unwin. 2s.

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

medieval merely as men are who are born six centuries too late. Of the two brothers, Cecil is the more thoroughgoing. He lately stood up in a public meeting as a Rationalist Catholic, and said that he believed in miracles on the strictly rational ground that it was more probable that a miracle should occur than that the Catholic Church, being infallible, should be mistaken. I was present on that occasion, and was restrained only by my unfortunate shyness from rising like the elder Weller and giving three cheers for so heroic an act of modernist abnegation. Gilbert, who has what Nietzsche would have called an all-too-human fund of conscientious common sense, could not follow this daring lead: he only said, as I might have said myself, "I believe in miracles because the whole place is full of them: I have been staring at them and wondering at them all my life." And then up got Mr McCabe, who believes himself to be a modernist, and with a sudden and amazing resumption of the cucullus (the absence of which does *not* make a man a scientist) said that if Mr Gilbert Chesterton would perform a miracle, he (Mr McCabe) would fall down and worship him. Implying thereby a syllogism which would, in its sheer superstitiousness, have scandalized St Thomas Aquinas, and which probably did much to confirm Mr Cecil Chesterton in his belief that the atavistic path is the right one.

I derive a certain chuckling amusement from the harmless fact that though Cecil regards his intellectual plan of campaign as typically Catholic and Latin, it is in fact intensely Protestant and Northern. Mr Houston Chamberlain has remarked that the Greeks were prevented from attaining any eminence in mathematics by their intellectual integrity. When they found that they could not proceed further without assuming an impossibility, they stopped. But the English mathematician, with a child's wisdom and a child's intellectual unscrupulousness, got over the obstacle by simply assuming the impossible, and presently found that he got workable results. When the Greek said "I am beaten here, because two parallel lines, however far produced, can never meet; nor can two and two ever make five" the Englishman

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

simply said "Well, if they wont, it is clearly necessary to pretend that they will; so *I* am not beaten; and, anyhow, if the thing works, somebody (say Bertrand Russell) is sure to come along later on and prove that *I* was right." Thus the Chestertons, and especially Cecil, are pillars of the Protestant North of Mr Houston Chamberlain, not of the Latin logic of Mr Belloc. They are disciples of Newton and Leibniz, not of St Augustine and the Heavenly Doctor. Having noticed that modern Secularism, Materialism, Rationalism: in short, Possibilism, have brought the minds of Mr Blatchford and Mr McCabe to a dead stop in the middle of the nineteenth century, they, being in the twentieth century and urgently sensible of the need for getting a move on, have frankly embraced Impossibilism, with very brilliant and stimulating results, pouring forth most suggestive essays on exploded assumptions whilst their scandalized critics, on the soundest ground, find themselves unable to say anything at all unless they have some new facts to bring forward. And man cannot live by new facts alone, however interesting, but by pondering on old ones, real and unreal.

With this brief preamble I can, without being more than usually misunderstood, proceed to my duty of reviewing the readablest and quite the maddest book produced by the war: namely, *The Prussian Hath Said in His Heart*, by Cecil Chesterton, who says very truly that it is what a man says in his heart that matters, and not what he says in Hyde Park. In spite of this and many other equally sane remarks, the book is noticeably mad even at present, when everyone is more or less mad, and sanity is positively dangerous. The madness has the charm of Don Quixote's madness: it is argued with such conspicuous historical and literary ability that everything about it is quite first rate except the premisses, which are so entirely and recklessly mad that they do not matter. There is even a fundamental sanity behind them because though they are laughably in conflict with obvious facts, like Don Quixote's giants which were really windmills and his armies which were really flocks of sheep, yet they do correspond to certain things that actually happened in the minds

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

of men, and are still happening there, with, among other consequences, the war.

For instance, the thesis that Prussia is fighting Russia and France because Frederick the Great was an atheist who scrapped medieval religion, only reminds us that Peter the Great did the same thing with the most appalling ferocity just before Frederick came upon the scene, and that in France every second street is called the Avenue Paul Bert, and every church and rectory protests to heaven that English Harry has come again in the person of Monsieur Combes to lay religion in the dust. In contrast to which, the standing joke about the Kaiser is his habit of presenting to young ladies, not Nietzsche's Beyond Good And Evil, or Machiavelli's Prince, or Lord Chesterfield's letters, or The Quintessence of Ibsenism, or Shakespear's Richard III, or anything conceivably in Frederick's taste, but a little volume entitled Talks with Jesus. Everywhere we see the Militarist reading family prayers and the novels of Miss Marie Corelli. Frederick made his mark in history, not as an atheist (very few people are told that he was an atheist) but as a Protestant hero, and as one of those great Masters of Veracity whom Carlyle painted so well that he fell into a habit of producing ideal portraits of them and labelling them Cromwell and Frederick with a recklessness that even Mr Cecil Chesterton has not outdone. All the exploits for which Mr Cecil Chesterton holds up Frederick to execration were strictly in the line of the Most Christian kings. Nothing in them can be referred to his atheism except the fact that he was not hypocritical about them; and this, surely, is a virtue which the Most Christian kings lacked, and not a villainy to which they were too pious to stoop. His taste for profane jokes, caught from Voltaire, perhaps, is, curiously enough, the one taste that atheists have in common with saints: it is your hopelessly irreligious churchgoer who is shocked at hearing "sacred things spoken lightly of" and thinks Mr Gilbert Chesterton's occasional side-splitting use of phrases from the Athanasian Creed really too awful.

The truth is, Frederick the Great was an atheist, Peter the Great was an atheist, Catherine the Great was an atheist, Napoleon

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

the Great was an atheist; and they all extended their territories by making war on their neighbors, and tearing treaties into scraps of paper when it suited them. But what about Louis XI and Charles V and Philip II and Henry V and Louis XIV and Cæsar Borgia and the pious Sultans who, under the banner of Allah, carried on in precisely the same manner? Sound Theists these; and many of them ardent Catholics. I am afraid we cannot have it both ways. Even if we assume that real faith passed away with the Middle Ages, the fact remains that Frederick's vices were medieval theocratic vices, although he did not believe he could wash their guilt away by building cathedrals or endowing abbeys. His virtues, and the signal honor that befell him (John Sebastian Bach once spoke to him and played for him) were specifically modern in their manifestation.

Nevertheless something did happen; and that something was quite simply what we call Capitalism. "Honor sinks where commerce long prevails" said the Irish poet. "What is this but trading without conscience?" said the English tinker. Capitalism conquered the Church and made her a mere blind for "trading without conscience." What had once called itself Christendom did say, as Mr Cecil Chesterton accuses Frederick of saying, "Evil: be thou my good"; and what is more, the principle actually worked, and the evil did to an astonishing extent become good, as Macaulay and the other optimists of the first half of the nineteenth century gloried in pointing out. But to suppose that Frederick the Great was any deeper in this than our Hanoverian Georges, or even than the Vatican, is to flout history. There is really nothing to be got out of an attempt to make out Prussia worse than the rest of Europe, or more atheistic than the rest of Europe. There are differences, of course. The Prussian army, for instance, began as a collection of serfs; and as armies, like Churches and courts, public schools and universities, petrify and preserve the conditions in which they begin, the Prussian officer still strikes the Prussian soldier with his whip as serfs were struck by their masters, whereas in the British army, which began as a retinue of hired footmen, the soldier is not subject to this par-

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

ticular usage, though this did not save him in Frederick's time and long after from being sentenced to floggings of thousands of lashes. Mr Cecil Chesterton is shocked at the idea of Frederick's soldiers receiving hundreds.

Also, there is something in Mr Cecil Chesterton's description of the Prussian State as a comparatively rootless, artificial, modern machine-made thing, as distinguished from the French or English State. But he omits to notice, first, that the model imitated by the makers of the new machine was, on the side of culture, France, and on the side of ruthless predatory world-defying war, England. Add that the Russia manufactured by Peter the Great was a far more flagrant *postiche* than Prussia; that modern Japan is frankly and proudly Brummagem; that these two artificial States are our Allies against Prussia; and down comes the whole temple of cards in which Mr Cecil Chesterton teaches that this war is a war of the old deep-rooted pieties and humanities against the contrivance of an upstart warlock. The case against the enemy on this ground is insolence pure and simple: all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God; and there is not a State in the world at present with a presentable character. In vain does Mr Cecil Chesterton indignantly retell the story of the Ems telegram: the device by which Mr Asquith and Sir Edward Grey concealed our military compact with the Franco-Russian Alliance from the Germans, from the House of Commons, from the anti-Imperialist section of the Cabinet, and from the nation until we were committed to the war, was not a whit more Christian or less Bismarckian. The vice is in our institutions, not in those who have to make them work; and if Frederick and Mr Asquith, Bismarck and Sir Edward, had exchanged characters and religions, the result would have been the same as far as the morals of diplomacy are concerned.

Mr Cecil Chesterton's finest stroke as a historian is that in which he associates what may be called The Great Exhibition phase of British Pacifism, of Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform, with the names of Cobden and, not Bright, but Shelley. That shews penetration and capacity as well as a reading that has gone

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

much deeper and much farther than the histories of Macaulay and Justin McCarthy. But to reconcile it with the madness of his thesis he is forced to class Shelley as an Arch Materialist. And if it had been necessary on the same ground to class Walpole as a seraph, I have no doubt Mr Cecil Chesterton would have done it, and done it very cleverly. Leaving Mr Henry Salt to vindicate Shelley, and Mr McCabe to defend the atheism of Frederick, I will content myself with explaining to Mr Cecil Chesterton why it is that the extreme horror of physical cruelty which he cites as evidence of the materialism of Shelley and his disciples (of whom I profess myself one) is in fact the mark of the spiritual man everywhere. Physical torture is the one means by which the lowest humanity can degrade and destroy the highest. It is the foul blow in the glorious warfare of souls for salvation. The continual effort of the saint is to make himself incapable of it; and if the sinner takes advantage of this to make himself continually more proficient in the arts of violent coercion, the world will go straight to the devil. That is pretty simple, I think, and pretty obvious. And that is why the utilitarian cruelty of the German, and, one must honestly add, of the Englishman, is so much more dangerous than the voluptuous cruelty of the passionate southerners. Mr Austin Harrison has made the distinction very acutely in *The Kaiser's War*, another very interesting book on the war, attacking Prussia with first-hand knowledge and with ultra-Prussian realism and implacability. To the mere voluptuary, torturing one man—or better still, one woman—is as good fun as torturing another. But the man who *selects* Bruno or Servetus or Shelley, and tortures him for business reasons, is the one who forces us to recognize that physical torture is the trump card of the materialist politician, and that it must be ruled out of civilized usage at all hazards.

Also, Mr Cecil Chesterton is wrong, I think, in assuming, as he does by implication, that the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the Church. He speaks often of modern civilization as Christendom, and of Christianity as a prevalent faith. Does it really look like that to him? To me the spectacle of Europe at the present moment suggests nothing in that connection except grim

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

congratulations to Annas, Caiaphas, Judas Iscariot, and Pontius Pilate on having done their job so thoroughly.

But Mr Cecil Chesterton's madness rises even to the acceptance of the war as a highly Christian spectacle. And he believes not only in the actual academic devastation of Belgium, with the pompous snob-noodle officer everywhere putting his foot down (that characteristic gesture of the weak man) and his ridiculous proclamations up, and getting nothing out of it but useless misery for others and damaging disgrace for his country, but in the legendary Belgian soldier with his eyes gouged out, and the Belgian hospital nurse with her hands chopped off, and the Belgian baby without fingers which the American correspondents and Mr McKenna were alike unable to trace. Would it not be kinder to our own people who have husbands and sons going out to face "the Huns" to assure them that, to say the least, it is not *quite* certain that if they should fall into the hands of the enemy they will be horribly mutilated into the bargain? Cannot that crude department of patriotism which consists in inventing atrocities, and in hooting at those who know a bogus atrocity from a real one, be left to the crude people? Surely the truth is quite bad enough for all controversial purposes, even though it be within the usages of what is called civilized warfare.

Finally, as to that delending of Carthage which Mr Cecil Chesterton demands. Will he explain exactly how it is to be done, even on the assumption of the completest possible victory for our arms?

ON BRITISH SQUEALING, AND THE SITUATION AFTER THE WAR¹

(From *The New Republic* of the 6th January 1917)

Mr Cecil Chesterton has set an example to all editor-authors by asking me to review his book because I do not agree with it and am beyond all suspicion of having any venal reasons for hesitating to say so. It is true that I am biassed to the extent of

¹ The Perils of Peace. By Cecil Chesterton. With an Introduction by Hilaire Belloc. London: Werner Laurie. 2s. net.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

being personally friendly to him; but that should be the normal attitude of every reviewer to every author. A malicious review may be as exciting as a dog fight; but it is even a worse horror; and I do not admit that a friendly bias is a corrupt one.

I do not in the least disagree with Mr Cecil Chesterton in the immediate object of his book, which is, to avert a sudden laying down of our arms. But I see no danger of that: we are far more likely to go on fighting long after there is nothing more to be gained by it. For the rest, the book is full of the most frightful nonsense. It pours an invective which would be excessive if applied to the seven deadly sins on the commonplaces of normal political conduct; it quotes facts given in the most accessible books of reference with an air of dragging to light the darkest conspiracies and the most treacherous secrets; it draws pictures of the Germans and the English and the French and the Jews and the Christians and the Russians which can be dismissed without documentary verification or refutation because they are not pictures of human beings. It starts from the monstrous assumption that any sixty millions of modern white Europeans can differ from any other sixty millions of them. But its errors are marked by red flags. They are all outrageous errors, and, as such, amusing errors. And the attacks on innocent or negligible individuals are so vehemently forced that they end, very oddly, by producing an effect of good nature. It is like a man working himself up to a Berserker orgasm in a pillow fight. There are, it is true, moments at which Mr Cecil Chesterton persuades us that he rather dislikes Mr Lloyd George. But when he goes for Mr Morel with gestures and denunciations and threats and accusations which would be overstrained if applied to Iago or Judas Iscariot, he fails so hopelessly as a hater that there is something irresistibly ludicrous in his final complaint that he cannot provoke Mr Morel to any demonstration of resentment.

Mr Morel brings out this lack of real gall in the Chestertonian diathesis by his own deadly implacability. One cannot conceive Mr Morel throwing pillows. He would throw spears and throw them to kill. Mr Chesterton cannot hate hard enough to hunt up

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

a single fact about Mr Morel that Mr Morel has not thrust down his throat in his own public accounts of himself. He declares that because Mr Morel signs himself E. D. Morel, whereas he was christened Georges (the authority for Georges being Mr Morel himself) he has, in effect, revived the dark lantern of Guy Fawkes. It must be a source of boundless secret delight to Mr Morel that he has yet another name which Mr Chesterton has never found out, and which he might find out without the slightest difficulty, just as he could find out that AE's name is George Russell, that Voltaire's name was Arouet, or that Oscar Wilde concealed the resounding Fingal O'Flaherty which his godfathers and godmothers gave him in baptism. Thus Mr Chesterton has not malice enough even to pick up another pillow when it lies ready to his hand. He says, in effect, "This scoundrel dares to walk through the lanes of England with his clothes on, and crush her tender verdure with his muddy boots. He has been left money. He has been an honorary secretary. He has been in the employment of capitalist companies. He belongs to a Union with a creed which I could sign without doing violence to my conscience. His father's name was Edmond Morel de Ville. He himself was naturalized in Liverpool. He was employed by Sir Alfred Jones. He was employed by John Holt and Sons. John Holt backed him in his Congo agitation. These are facts and not inferences. I state them in all their damning cumulativeness; and I ask before heaven and earth whether they can leave any doubt in the mind of any sane and honest patriot that 'Morel' is an agent of the Prussian government? If the man is innocent why does he not clear himself? If the man has an explanation, why does he not give it? If he has nothing to be ashamed of, why does he hide? [Mr Morel hides in public meetings where three thousand Britons pass his resolutions and cheer his person unanimously]. He cannot deny the facts, because I have them all from himself. I have given him the name of my solicitors. He can appeal to the dispassionate verdict of a British war jury at a cost of a thousand pounds or so. If he prefers to sit down under this crushing indictment, can it be doubted that it is true on every count: that he *has* been an honorary secretary;

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

that he *was* employed by Jones and Holt; that Jones and Holt *were* capitalists; that his father's name *was* Morel de Ville; that he himself has confessed to all these facts; and that the inference that he is a Prussian agent is logical and inevitable?"

Now these are not the accents of hatred: they are the rhetorical amusements of a man too amiable to take five minutes trouble to find out something really damaging to say of his opponent; for Mr Morel, being at best only a mortal man, cannot be so utterly and angelically blameless as Mr Cecil Chesterton's denunciations leave him. I could myself, with a turn of the hand, and without betraying by a single phrase that I was talking nonsense, give such an account of Mr Cecil Chesterton's paper, from its first foundation in the fortunes of Stephen Swift to its editor's own adventures before the tribunal to which he challenges Mr Morel to appeal, as would make the very worst he has said of Mr Morel and his career seem a Sunday school certificate by comparison. In fact an innocent joke of mine about the discovery of Grosjean as a Chesterton family name in the very book of reference to which Mr Cecil Chesterton owes his knowledge of Mr Morel's half French extraction, has, in the hands of Mr H. G. Wells, compelled Mr Chesterton to disclaim quite strenuously the criticism of his pedigree, not in the least disgraceful or uncomplimentary, which Mr Morel avows without embarrassment.

The sham bombardment of Mr Morel, who, being in dead earnest and a thorough good hater, pegs away fiercely at his real enemies and feels no sting in Mr Cecil Chesterton's unconscious fun, gives the clue to the whole of *The Perils of Peace*. Mr Cecil Chesterton is a lazily goodnatured and disinterested man playing at being Fouquier Tinville, and he combines with an extraordinary precocity of literary talent and susceptibility a quite childish innocence of the wickedness of the world. He writes with a swing and trenchancy of style, a copiousness in language and illustration, an ineffectually disguised geniality and humor, for which most editors would barter such chances as they have left of salvation; but he reduces himself to wild absurdity by taking the commonplaces of every policeman's daily round as

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

outrages which stagger creation and demand the destruction of the nation that tolerates them. Listen to this, for example.

"When I read of the Wittenberg horrors—the climax so far as we are concerned of Prussian infamy—I know that I entertained the hope that I should never again hear an Englishman speak of peace, at least until we had the enemy beaten to his knees. There is one particular episode in that hideous story which I would like to see written up in large letters on every hoarding and taught to the children in every Boarding School. It is that of the German doctor—by name Aschenbach—approaching the hell to which our men were condemned, standing afar off protected by mask and gloves and other precautions for his personal safety, and calling the brave soldiers among whom he and his like had deliberately spread a filthy plague 'English swine.'

"There are only two alternatives to be pursued in regard to these words. One is to note them; to remember them; and, please God, in due time to take full vengeance for them. The other is to deserve them."

This is an amazing explosion. The Wittenberg horror was a very hackneyed horror of war: its history was the history of most typhus camps of prisoners of war, even in wars waged by the most humane and civilized peoples. One does not forget, for instance, H. M. Stanley's autobiographical description of his experience in a typhus camp in the American Civil War. It was important to expose the Wittenberg horror thoroughly because it effectually disposed of the notion that the Germans, who are a very unmilitary people, and have to be kept in fighting order by an exaggeration and ostentation and idealization of military duty and organization that would be ridiculous in comparatively pugnacious peoples like the British and French, can stand a strain on discipline any better than the rest of us. What happened was that the German army disgraced itself professionally, and the German medical service turned tail in the face of its enemy typhus. Mr Cecil Chesterton passes over this, except for an implied condemnation of the doctor for very properly resorting to the medical equivalent of the trench helmet. What rouses him to a burst of

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

evidently heartfelt comminatory eloquence is the fact that the Germans call us "English swine."

Just think of it! At the outbreak of the war I was at a hotel in Devon; and the first I heard of it when I came down in the morning was from a very ordinary and typical Englishman on the elderly side of forty, who, after a fairly successful attempt to say unconcernedly "I suppose we shall have to fight them" suddenly became spitefully hysterical and changed "them" into "those swine" twice in every sentence. From that day to the publication of Mr McGill's book, *The Great Push*, the other day, when its vivid quotations of the sort of language with which men work themselves up to bayonet charges, not a day has passed without the word swine being applied to Germans by Englishmen probably not less than a hundred thousand times; and no sensible person dreams of fussing about it, or doubting that it is applied quite as freely in Germany to our noble selves. Yet to the cloistered innocence of Mr Cecil Chesterton the discovery that a German doctor used that ungentlemanly expression comes with a shock that moves him to describe it as "the climax of Prussian infamy," and to declare before God that if we do not avenge it we shall deserve it. Someday he will discover that a much less printable epithet is not only in common use as between the German and the British soldier, but as between one British or German soldier and another. And then I shall tremble for his sanity.

This is the extreme instance of the penalty Mr Cecil Chesterton pays, partly for a genuine innocence, and partly for the intellectual misdemeanor of applying nursery morality to diplomacy and war. In this he is more Pacifist than the most fanatical of the Pacifists he denounces. In comparison, Mr Clifford Allen is another *Bombastes Furioso* when the topic is the crime of making war and adding to the national territory by the sword. For doing so wicked a thing the Prussian must be stamped out of existence like a malignant cancer. The fighting creed and Will to Conquer that has come down from King Arthur's Round Table to Roberts and Butler in arms, and to the Chestertons in

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

literature; the doctrine that all progress depends on the ruthless natural selection by which the strong exterminate the weak: a doctrine which we gave the world through Darwin and Wallace, and the British originality of which we so scornfully defend against Nietzsche, Treitschke, and Bernhardi: all this is of the devil and his minister Frederick the Great, and must be utterly rooted up and cast into the furnace as the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, the one entirely damnable heresy.

But at this rate, what is to become of us, and of the French eagles, and of Russia with her Peter after whom Frederick seemed to us a Protestant hero? Mr Chesterton says, and repeats, that the Germans prepared for this war for two years beforehand. Well, we have the public assurance of our two responsible ministers, Churchill and Haldane, that our navy took the seas with five years' express accumulation of ammunition, and that Lord French was virtually appointed Commander-in-Chief for "der Tag" five years before 1914, and had been studying the terrain in Flanders all the time. I do not see how under the circumstances we could have done otherwise; but according to Mr Cecil Chesterton, in his character of fanatic Pacifist, these proceedings convict us of being twice and a half as guilty as Prussia. There are no limits to his Pacifist horror of the incidents of war. The slaying of women and children by Zeppelin shells is murder: the bombardment of unfortified towns is sheer devilry. Just before the Allied air raid on Karlsruhe, a British airman had the ill luck to drop a bomb into a group of children at play, with results that may be imagined. The more ignorantly patriotic German journals wrote of this as if the British airman, to gratify a natural taste common in England for blowing little children to pieces, had swooped down; looked about him; seen the children; exclaimed gleefully "Hurrah! Here's some kids: let's do them in"; and carefully stopped his machine about ten feet above them to drop his bomb with precise aim in their midst. The perfectly well known facts that he must have been flying at a speed of nearly a hundred miles an hour, perhaps 12,000 feet up (to avoid Archibalds), and launched his bomb quarter of a mile before he reached the town,

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

had no effect on these writers. The still more obvious, because quite non-technical fact, that to kill a baby in a beleaguered city or blockaded country is to do it the military service of economizing its food and labor, so that if the Royal Flying Corps concerned itself with the infant problem at all it could only do so by tying live babies to parachutes and dropping them into German towns to create a run on milk tickets, went equally for nothing. The killing of the children was a horror; and we were beasts and fiends and Huns to do it. From the point of view of the Pacifist, there is no denying this. And that is just the view Mr Cecil Chesterton takes. The killing of a child by a bomb launched from military aircraft is not to him war: it is murder; and the nation which commits it is a nation of devils. Mr Clifford Allen will heartily agree. And that is certainly a way of looking at it: perhaps finally the right way of looking at it; but what then must be said of us, who are constantly doing these things (as I write I hear of our last exploit over Bruges), and gloating over descriptions of it under the heading "Gallant Feats by our Airmen. British Supremacy in the Air"? The desire to have it both ways: to be a Pacifist when a bomb drops in Fulham and a Jingo when it drops in Freiburg is as natural as it is naïve; but it is not political science. Mr Cecil Chesterton's Pacifist feelings do him credit, as Mr Clifford Allen's feelings do *him* credit; but Mr Clifford Allen does not expect to have it both ways; and Mr Cecil Chesterton does.

"The Germans guessed, and as it proved, rightly, that modern fortifications could not stand against modern siege artillery" says Mr Cecil Chesterton. Precisely; and it follows that they knew that the success of their dash to Paris, and consequently the fate of the whole campaign, depended on their obliterating the forts of Liège at the first shot. Yet they arrived before Liège without siege guns; were held up before it by Leman for many days; and finally had to wait for Austrian guns. It was that delay, not the battle of the Marne, that left Germany without a chance of ultimate victory. She should have been in Paris before she reached Brussels; and her famous intelligence department, with its fabu-

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

lous network of spies, ended in her spending more days hesitating before Antwerp than she need have spent minutes had she only known the truth as to the defence. Mr Cecil Chesterton knows the Prussian program; but he has been so Pacifistically preoccupied with its warlike wickedness that he has failed to notice that it was a paper program, and that, when it came to the point, the boasted preparation and organization for it had simply not taken place: the whole thing was mere postprandial brag, war-game and club-fender gossip.

We, on the other hand, were fairly well prepared to the extent of our pledge. The Belgians were prepared to the extent of their resources, and put up a very good fight. The collapse of the French at Namur has not yet been explained; but Joffre made no excuse of unpreparedness: he said bluntly, as a big man would, that the retreat was sheer military misconduct, and should not have occurred. It was the German preparedness that proved to be romance. Germany of course was not wholly unprepared; for no country with compulsory service and a military aristocracy headed by a king whose chief amusement is playing at soldiers can answer to that description; but there is most certainly no convincing evidence that the German general staff were as well acquainted with the writings of Bernhardi or von Bülow as Mr Cecil Chesterton, or indeed acquainted with them at all. It seems to have known rather less about these writers than the British War Office knows about Mr Belloc or Mr Blatchford. The Next War which had been so often described over the walnuts and wine, with the salt-cellars for fortresses, was a wonderfully planned business; but no one who has followed the actual campaign without illusions will ever again suspect the German authorities of being a party to it. As to the silly forgery which appeared in the French Orange Book, and which Mr Cecil Chesterton still quotes seriously, though no one else does, the French Government did not make even a pretence that it was an authentic official document. Shapira's original manuscript of the Pentateuch was plausible in comparison.

The truth of this matter is that preparation for war is not

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

humanly possible. It is no discredit to be prepared for war. All nations should be prepared for war. All houses should be protected by lightning conductors. Every man's will should be made and his soul ready to appear before the judgment seat at a moment's notice. And every convinced believer in vaccination should have himself revaccinated once a fortnight. But we dont do these things. Mr Spenlow, who was so eloquent as to the positive wickedness of not making a will, died intestate; and all these terrible Iron Chancellors and Brass Tamburlaines with their shining armor and their mailed fists, who, when the Kaiser rushes into their bedroom and cries "War is declared" mumble "Third portfolio on the left" and go to sleep again, are humbugs like Mr Spenlow. There are no portfolios, no timetables, no invasion routes marked out with "controls" like the Tourist Trophy motor-bicycle race. People write about such things as they write about Anarchist conspiracies or Jesuit plots, because they amuse the human imagination. But the plan does not go beyond ink and paper. Germany and Austria on the one hand, and England, France, and Russia on the other, ought to have been preparing elaborately during the last ten years for the present conflict. The least neglect was criminal; and their Maxses and Blatchfords and Robertses kept telling them so. Yet their preparation never went beyond such obvious steps as keeping level with one another in the matter of armaments, and arranging that if England looked after the North Sea France would look after the Mediterranean. General French, as we have learnt, was supposed to be studying the ground in Flanders for five years. I should like to see a diary of his studies outside Brussels.

The importance of this lies in the entire hopelessness of all schemes of military preparations of the Bernhardian type. If we depend on defence programs and invasion timetables, on plaster Machiavellis and generals who gain a reputation, like the one in Mr H. G. Wells's book, by presenting themselves to the nation in profile, we shall be led into paper adventures and real disasters like the Germans. Our business is to provide the conditions for improvising an army at the shortest possible notice, and not fight

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

until we have to. It is possible to trust in God, to keep your powder dry, and not to be in a hurry to bid the devil good morning. It is not possible to plan a conquest as if it were a Cook's tour. That way lies Moscow or the Marne.

There are two main facts to be grasped before any sensible criticism of the war can be delivered. The first is that the judgment of international relations by the ordinary morality of personal intercourse between fellow citizens in peace is as idle as taking the temperature of molten steel by a common bath thermometer. "The doctrine that great nations live only by aggression and expansion" may be called into question as between great nations and God; but to call it into question as between the British Empire, the French Republic, the Russian Empire, and the Central Empires is mere mud-slinging. The British nation has expanded by sheer aggression and extermination over North America, Australia, at least half the available part of Africa, and the whole of Egypt and India, whilst Germany is still clamoring for a place in the sun. The cry of "World power or downfall," as applied to naval command of the sea, is a British cry. Bernhardi's contention that Prussia must destroy the power of England or lose her own is exactly balanced by Mr Cecil Chesterton's contention that England must destroy the power of Prussia or lose her own. We may say to Prussia, like the Shakespearean warrior "For one or both of us the hour is come"; but we must not make ourselves ridiculous by claiming moral superiority to a line of conduct of which we have never ceased to boast that we set the example to the world. Mr Chesterton himself, when he turns from abusing the Prussians to attacking the Government, throws it in the teeth of our Cabinet ministers that they are not crafty and unscrupulous, acquisitive and domineering in the old oligarchic fashion; and here I think he does the national spirit and instinct an injustice (however the nation's very inadequate mouthpieces may deserve his scorn); for never has the British Lion made so terrible a spring or chosen his moment and cut off the retreat of his prey with such consummate luck and cunning as in this matter of striking down his German rival. Just consider it! Germany placed morally in

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

the wrong by her own initiative; Germany hemmed in and besieged and blockaded by all the formidable Christian Powers of Europe; Germany lured to attack whilst her navy was still incomplete and her alliances still unachieved; Germany at such a discount that Italy deserts her, Rumania attacks her, and Viscount Grey is at last in a position to bully Sweden: is not all this a theme for the trumpet rather than the harmonium, for the shouting triumphant warrior rather than for the hypocrite concealing his copy of Machiavelli in the binding of a hymnbook? The Lion's Ambush will long be remembered as the culminating feat of the warlike old England in the mastery of the warlike old world; and the epitaph of the warlike old Prussia will be "She met her match in England."

Why should Mr Chesterton be ashamed of it? That he should be afraid of it is significant; for "the glories of our blood and state are shadows, not substantial things"; and our turn will come too if we persist in the old bloody path that presently becomes a barren path and ends in destruction and in that "Ouf!" of relief which Napoleon said would be uttered by the world at his death. But we cannot extricate ourselves from it yet, nor, being in it for good or evil, refuse to fight. The Pacifist, as Mr Cecil Chesterton points out, would wreck us without achieving his own millennium if he paralyzed our army and broke our charge now; but that is so obvious to our commonsense that nobody obeys the Pacifist. The really dangerous person is the nursery moralist: to wit, Mr Cecil Chesterton himself, who shrieks that because the Prussians put to the test of battle their rivals for the mastery of the world they are as dogs that delight to bark and bite "for 'tis their nature to." Not a word of all this pseudo-humanitarian moral snobbery can fail to recoil on our own heads, discouraging men who are doing the actual fighting in the field and know well that we also are scattering the living temples of the Holy Ghost in horrible ruin on the torn breast of their common mother. Even if war were no more than the rushing riot of swearing ruffians our newspapers exult in, no man actually carrying a bayonet in it would be so unsoldierly as to stab a German with a cry of "I condemn you

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

to death for attempted murder and improper language" instead of shouting the honest profanities and obscenities quoted by Mr McGill, navvy, poet, and stretcher-bearer under fire.

The second fact to be kept steadily in view is that as fear is the most universal of emotions, and war raises fear beyond all self-respect in weak men as it raises valor above all self-regard in strong ones, every war produces a Reign of Terror in which the government must either rise to the occasion or sit trembling on the front bench, a row of twopenny-halfpenny Robespierres, not daring to rebuke the mob that will shriek for its blood at the next rumor of disaster. We civilians have made, it must be confessed, a very sorry exhibition of panic-stricken blackguardism since August 1914. Forgetting in our spite and terror that the Germans hold hostages for all the prisoners we have taken, we have looted and persecuted, reviled and insulted and assaulted. We have meanly robbed poor women of their little savings: we have seized a man for going from one part of London to another to snatch a caress from his wife, and have punished him as we punish only the most savage hooligans. Editors of newspapers have printed dastardly letters demanding that German prisoners of war, when they die, shall not be buried as soldiers who have fought for their country, but thrown on the dungheap to rot "like dogs." We have denied the soldierly brotherhood of the grave to the men who braved and met the most terrible death our new battle methods have discovered: the Phaeton's death that hurls you from the skies and burns you in the fiercest flame before you strike the earth and are dashed to pieces. Our authorities have been actually afraid to bury them with military honors because of the ravings of a few rascals, two of whom attempted to insult the funeral, and were handled as they deserved to be by the crowd of decent English folk in whose existence our cad-ridden Cabinet will not believe. Why need Mr Cecil Chesterton, by holding up the parallel infamies of German cowards as if they were peculiar to Prussia, force us in common justice to acknowledge that we too have such cowards among us?

Here, I think, Mr Cecil Chesterton's innocence has again mis-

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

led him. It is evident that he has been deeply moved by the horror of the atrocities which have been hawked about by the Terrorists. It is equally evident that he does not know the trick of atrocity mongering, which consists in trading on just such innocence as his. Take for example Lord Bryce's report of the atrocities in Belgium. The answer to the case founded on it for treating Germany as an exceptionally wicked nation is not that the atrocities did not occur. No doubt it may be said of some of them that there was no more pretence of serious evidence than of an impartial tribunal. But some of the worst of them carried conviction, even without evidence, because they were things that occur wherever two or three millions are gathered together, even in peace. Mr Cecil Chesterton, perhaps Lord Bryce himself, has no suspicion of the normal atrocity rate as revealed by the cases at our assizes which could not possibly be reported in papers intended for family reading, and indeed cannot even be tried. It is only when a society is formed to check some specially pitiable form of cruelty, such as The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, that we get from its reports and appeals for subscriptions a blasting glimpse of what human nature is capable of at its vilest. If, as we have so often seen, any newspaper can get up a flagellomaniac garotting scare or a "white slave" epidemic by simply reporting all the cases of robbery with violence and of procuration that come before our police courts (each of which in London deals daily with about eighty cases of all sorts, only a few of which can possibly be reported even by papers still old-fashioned enough to make prominent copy out of such matter) we can just barely imagine, though I could not do so if I had not seen some of the records, what an indictment could be piled up against us by an industrious dirt-hunting Prussian if he swept out our criminal records to prove that we were devils whose extermination was the most sacred duty of "God's German." It is impossible to go into details; and if it were possible I should not befoul the consciousness of my readers uselessly by doing so. But I solemnly warn our patriots against the disgusting game of capping atrocities. There are abysses in every nation which

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

should not be uncovered for the purpose of belittling it before other nations. Time enough for that when at last we make up our minds to clean them out at home.

As to the deliberate *Schrecklichkeit* of the Germans in Belgium, here again no man should judge unless he knows the military history of all invasions, and of that very British institution, the punitive expedition. It may be that before the end of this war our armies will be on German soil, surrounded by a population to whom the killing of a British or Allied soldier will be, not a murder, but an act of faith and patriotism. The laws of Germany will not protect us from the sniper or the incendiary. What will protect us will be *Schrecklichkeit* and nothing but *Schrecklichkeit*. We can only hope that the fate of Belgium, as it has intimidated Greece, will intimidate Germany too, and so save any British general from being forced to such measures as Roberts had to take in Afghanistan and South Africa. It is useless shrieking at the wickedness of such things. Mr H. G. Wells, one of the most intelligent and cultivated men in England, was so carried away by the thought of an invasion of his country, that he declared that if it occurred, every German invader should be killed at sight like vermin. If Mr Wells was capable of that (and which of us has not felt capable of it at moments?) are we to believe that the Belgians of the Luxemburg border, including some of the roughest and rudest laborers in Europe, all understood that they must be polite and friendly to the Germans, and that they all behaved in a perfectly orderly manner accordingly? No sane Englishman could believe such a thing even if he had Von Bissing's own word for it, unless he were utterly ignorant of the inevitable and invariable conditions of invasion.

Mr Cecil Chesterton, if he is to be of any real use to his country during the war (and nobody wields a more capable pen), must clear his mind once for all of the notion that the German is any worse than any other man; that Frederick was worse than Peter or Louis XIV; that the long years of manoeuvring for the inside grip between the two giant wrestlers of the Central Empires and the Einkreisung were a mere stalking of the British sheep by

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

the Prussian wolf; and that the utmost abuse of victory (and if there is any victory it will perforce be abused to the utmost: Mr Chesterton need have no fears on that score) can Roman-Catholicize Lutheran Germany and make Franz Josef Holy Roman Emperor, either as “a frightful punishment” or as the vindication of “a certain historical veneration”: between which two views Mr Cecil Chesterton oscillates from chapter to chapter. He must not say that “the first condition of justice is the punishment of crime”; for the first condition of justice is the getting rid wholly of the idea of punishment. He must not talk of retaining Bayreuth and Weimar, Dresden and Munich, as “oases of tolerated barbarism.” He must not ask, “What declaration can the Great Powers sign which shall be more specific and binding than the declaration by which Prussia bound herself to respect the neutrality of Belgium?” because the instant answer, for which we need not go to Mr Morel, is the more recent and very much more specific treaty by which the Great Powers bound themselves to maintain by the sword the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, yet which they all, including ourselves, violated so much as a matter of course that they were hardly conscious of doing it. He must not say that “there is no such thing in war as stalemate”; for it would be much nearer the truth, if still not exactly true, that war hardly ever achieves anything else but stalemate; so that though the battles of history seem as the sands of the sea without number, books are written on “The Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World,” reminding us, among other things, that the decisive battle, as at Pharsalia, is sometimes the victory of the previously beaten side over the previously victorious one. He must not deny Lord Northcliffe and *The Times* credit for forcing the Government to remedy the shortage of shells and supersede Kitchener, on the wildly ridiculous ground that Lord Northcliffe had private reasons to know that he was right. Why deny a patent success? When *The Times* made its attack, we were short of shells; and Kitchener was generalissimo. The end of it was that Kitchener was completely shelved except for shop-window purposes (not altogether justly; for though he failed as an organizer and as a

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

soldier, he had an Irish eye for facts, and knew when things had to be done even when he did not know how to do them); and we were able to amaze the Germans by the prodigality of the Allied artillery on the Meuse and Somme. In the face of these glaring facts it is childish to keep on explaining that *The Times* was only echoing what the experts knew already. Of course it was: that is the business of a newspaper. What does *The New Witness* do but echo what Mr Belloc has already found out?

And with the hopeless attack on Lord Northcliffe must go the equally hopeless one on Mr Lloyd George as "George, the servant of Northcliffe." We were short of shells, and Mr Lloyd George, being made Minister of Munitions with the support of *The Times*, has managed to deliver the goods. We no longer hear of beleaguered British trenches sending despairing appeals to our batteries for aid, and being told, "We can spare you just one round." The amenability of a statesman to popular pressure, of which newspaper pressure is one form (however delusive) is hardly a matter for an editor to reproach him with. Mr Chesterton would not complain if the public houses were allowed to revert to their ante-war hours under the pressure of the articles in *The New Witness* denouncing the existing arrangements. The most brilliant fencer will lose our sympathy if he will not admit palpable hits; and there are moments when even people who would die rather than read *The Daily Mail* must feel inclined to tell Mr Cecil Chesterton to stow it when for the fiftieth time he tries to work up the extremely commonplace relations of Mr Lloyd George to Lord Northcliffe, and of *The Daily Mail* sub-editor to popular taste in headlines, into a conspiracy to subvert the realm and sue for mercy to the Kaiser. The only effect is to weaken the force of his quite justifiable attacks on our impudent political jobbery and corruption, which, however, are impudent because they are so abominably goodnatured, our statesmen being all like bad dentists, too amiable to hurt each other even when what they are sparing is malignant disease.

From the things that Mr Chesterton must not say let us turn to the facts that he must face. First, the fact that nothing has

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

happened in this war as yet that should make any man who knows what war means turn a hair. Atrocities in Belgium, pogroms in Galicia, Lusitania sinkings, bombs falling like the rain on the just and the unjust, the old and the young, the male and the female, Lille deportations, shootings of Nurse Cavell and Captain Fryatt and Sheehy Skeffington and the Baralong crew, the Wittenberg funk and the Ruhleben food, starvation blockades, violations of neutrality and tearing up of scraps of paper, poison gas and liquid fire and Juggernaut tanks: none of these raise any new moral question nor throw any new light on what human nature is capable of or on what war involves. If you go to war, you engage yourself not only to fight, but not to squeal. The Germans are out to shake our nerves; and the symptom of such shaking is squealing. Well, nobody can deny that the Germans have succeeded in shaking our civilian nerve to an extent very disgraceful to us. We have squealed shamelessly. The submarine and Zeppelin campaigns have been enormously encouraged by our squealing. If a member of the German General Staff shook his head over their slender physical results, and asked was it worth while to spend so much and run such risks for so trifling a bag, the reply must have been "Never mind the bag: read the English newspapers. Read *The New Witness*, written, not by twopenny-halfpenny journalists, but by some of the ablest writers in England; and see how it squeals. We are frightening them: their shrieks for revenge will presently become shrieks to their Government for peace at any price." How infinitely more prudent as well as more becoming was the wreath sent by our Royal Flying Corps to the grave of Immelmann, whom our squealing civilians would have buried at the crossroads with a stake driven through his body. We have had no statesmen capable of telling the squealers authoritatively that they must behave themselves: our front-benchers, headed by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, have led the squealing and vituperation themselves. We must therefore find our own salvation and pull ourselves together. It may not be easy for sentimental, half baked people; but it has to be done. For that matter, it is not easy for me, an Irish-

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

man, not to squeal over the exploits of General Maxwell, and the shocking persecution of the innocent women left dependent by the executions of Conolly and Roger Casement. But I do not spit foul epithets at Mr Chesterton and scream for the extermination of the British race. And as I certainly do not feel less strongly about Ireland than the squealers do about England, I conclude that if I can behave myself, they can; and I call on them to do a gentleman's duty in that matter, and build up their effectiveness with their emotions instead of demoralizing themselves, to Germany's great gratification and encouragement.

The other fact to be faced is that non-German Europe is not going to spend the remainder of the duration of this planet sitting on Germany's head. A head with the brains of sixty millions of people in it takes more sitting on than we have bottom for. What we have to consider closely is what is to become of the Alliance when the pressure under which it was riveted is removed. That pressure was the fear of Germany ("Fear is the mainspring of war"); and we have already shewn that the German terror was a scarecrow. Nobody now supposes that Germany can steamroll Europe, or that it was ever worth her while to try. The day after the peace we shall be more afraid of Russia than of Germany, and all Europe more afraid of us than of any other single Power. Victory for the Allies, or at the worst now to be feared their demonstration that a German victory is impossible, will knock the lynchpin out of the Allied applecart; and the strained embrace in which the Tommy, the Poilu, and the Cossack are now enlaced will relax with a very perceptible lowering of the temperature of their shoulders. The French tariffs will gall whilst the French navy grows; and the rugged Russian bear may, from new vantage grounds of Persia and Poland and Constantinople, overshadow regions which within my lifetime and even Mr Chesterton's we would have fought for to our last penny sooner than have left under Russia's influence or that of Japan, much less of the two in alliance. I was ridiculed in my youth for saying that the Balance of Power was still as live an issue as ever. Well, nobody ridicules me for uttering that platitude now; yet some of us

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

imagine that we can suddenly take the enormous weight of Germany out of the scales and replace it by a burning feather without bringing down the opposite scale with a crash that may jerk half the weights out of it. Our transient rages and spites and quarrelings and vendettas have no place in the diplomacy of such balancings. They are useful only as whisky is useful to a soldier who runs short of British pluck and has to eke it out with Dutch courage. Still less have they any place in the diplomacy which alone can supersede the diplomacy of military power-balancing. Supernational law, when it comes, will not be a respecter of nations; nor will it act on Mr Cecil Chesterton's proposal to establish a class of feeble-minded professional-criminal nations with curtailed rights as an excuse for plundering and disabling Germany.

Failing the establishment of supernational law, the Powers will have to fall back on alliances as before; for the days of single combat between the great Powers are over. And in the bidding for allies the balance of power will more and more lie with the United States, because they now form the only single political unit of the first magnitude that is completely self-sufficient. England will want an alliance with America; and Germany will have to choose between the west and the east. It will be vital to England's interest that Germany should not choose the east; and the only way to prevent her will be to let her into a western alliance. Now the exclusion of France from an Anglo-German-American combination would suit neither France nor the combination; and thus we may get what we should have played for all along: an irresistible magnetic nucleus for western civilization consisting of an allied France, Germany, Britain, and North America. Such a combination would almost instantly accrete the Netherlands and Scandinavia. As compared to it a combination of Japan, Russia, Italy, France, and England is a desperate and unnatural adventure in wanton heterogeneity; and nothing but the sense of an overwhelming danger from Germany keeps it together today. Mr Cecil Chesterton, in clamoring for the utter destruction of that danger, is also clamoring for the inevitable break-up of the

THE HUMORS OF PATRIOTIC INDIGNATION

combination it has called into being and held together. The more he studies the combinations that are likely to succeed it, the more he will appreciate the wisdom of the old political precept "Treat your friend as one who may some day be your enemy, and your enemy as one who may some day be your friend."

CHAPTER VII

EARLY WAR REPUTATIONS

So far, controversy about the war, except on the part of those whom its fever had deprived of all sense of responsibility, had been limited by the need for recruits under our voluntary system. As long as it was expected that the war would be over in a few months the Government could hope to carry it through without resort to conscription. But when Kitchener told us that it was going to be an affair of years, the fervid declarations that the entire manhood of the nation was prepared to shed the last drop of its blood in the struggle were brought to the experimental test. Of course they broke down under it. London had, as usual, no knowledge of the extent and intensity of feeling in the provinces, especially in the strongholds of the Labor Party and in Scotland, against "the Capitalist war." Now without unanimity as to the merits of the war voluntary enlistment cannot realize the full military resources of a nation. When it has drawn in all the adventurous youths, all the lovers of soldiering for its own sake, all the excitable dupes of militarist bunkum and official mendacity, and all the temperamental conquistadores, it stops, leaving untouched the Pacifists, the political opponents of the war, and the mass of indifferents who never dream of acting from public motives and will no more serve in the army without compulsion than on a jury. How far the nation was from unanimity may be gathered from the following.

WAR REPUTATIONS

(From To-day, 13th May 1916)

Some time ago it was gravely stated in a Viennese paper that I had shut myself up in my house, put sentries at my doors, and could shew myself in public only on pain of immediate assassination by the infuriated patriotic London mob. At that time our

EARLY WAR REPUTATIONS

own newspapers took it for granted that England was one solid roar of execration against Keir Hardie, and that the name Ramsay MacDonald was to British patriotism what the name of Judas Iscariot is to Christendom. Never were evil reputations more firmly and unanimously established, as far as the Press went.

What were the facts? Keir Hardie died, neither unwept, unhonored, nor unsung. His funeral was like the funeral of Nelson; and his obituary notices stand unparalleled for eulogy since the Royalist obituaries of Charles I. Mr MacDonald was addressing crowded meetings throughout the country, with such standings-up, and singings of "For he's a jolly good fellow," and salvos of cheers, as Mr Asquith himself can hardly elicit by the most dramatic repetitions of his famous stunt about the terms on which we will sheathe the sword. As for me, I was addressing large open public meetings in London every week, inviting and answering questions from all comers about the war or anything else, without a sign of hostility, and rather more than my usual meed of applause [the questions were mostly about the allowances to the wives of the absent soldiers]; and I was receiving resolutions strongly approving my Common Sense from the provinces every day.

I could multiply these instances of the planting out of fools' parades by the London press. And I could add some examples of the reversal of the process. For instance, a play denouncing the alleged drunkenness and selfishness of the slackers who were supposed to be responsible for the shortage in shells had such a huge success in transpontine London that its proprietors thought they had acquired a gold mine. In the provinces it had to be withdrawn at once. And when Mr Lloyd George tried his magic spell over the working classes on the Clyde, he could not secure even a hearing until he had claimed to be a friend of Mr MacDonald, and the Socialists had appealed to the audience to give him fair play.

I am not here concerned with the merits of these cases. It may be that Mr Lloyd George ought to have been carried shoulder-high in triumph through Scotland; that Keir Hardie ought to

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

have been buried at the cross-roads with a stake driven through him; that my works should have been burnt in the Stock Exchange as *The Daily Mail* was when that newspaper beloved of patriots first confessed a doubt as to whether we shall certainly beat the Germans if only we lie hard enough to one another; that Mr Ramsay MacDonald ought to have been “thrown against a wall and shot, as he would have been in Germany”; and that the entire conduct of civil affairs in England should have been placed unreservedly in the hands of Sir George MacGill.

But that is not my point. Rightly or wrongly, these things did not happen; and all the evidence we have points to the fact that only a handful of noisy nobodies wanted them to happen. Yet it was assumed that these disorderly persons were the British nation; that their spokesmen were the darlings and idols of the people; that it was dangerous as well as unpatriotic to say a word that was not an echo of their most spiteful ravings. When a meeting addressed by Mr Ponsonby at Richmond was broken up, roughs had to be hired to do it; and as the roughs were not introduced to one another before the fun commenced, they recognized one another only as objectionable characters, and pummelled each other vigorously, save one who accidentally tackled Mr Ponsonby, and, miscalculating the mettle of the true British Pacifico, had his head heartily punched for his pains.

Yet this squalid and ridiculous transaction was reported as if the whole empire had risen and swept an abhorred traitor into the blind cave of eternal night; and the Anti-German League (meaning, not the Anglo-Franco-Russian Alliance, but a little gang which, after painfully collecting £900 by inciting the public to misbehave in the face of the enemy, had its squalid affairs exposed last Saturday in the police-court) was allowed to fill the press with its unmannerly clamors whilst sane, responsible, and really representative public men were denied a hearing.

What was the use of all this depressing bluff? It did not frighten the Germans. It did not encourage us: on the contrary, it was obviously only part of the general panic which oppressed and distracted our more hysterical civilians when the war broke

EARLY WAR REPUTATIONS

out. The same sort of thing goes on in Germany; and the only effect of it on us is to make us feel that a nation which has not stuff enough in it to look everyday facts in the face, and snap its fingers at scarecrows, will never stick it out if we go on long enough. When did we first begin to believe in the French army after its retreat from Namur to the gates of Paris? It was when, in the middle of our absurd explanations that the retreat was a successful combination of profound strategy with undying heroism, Joffre electrified us by bluntly saying that the French should not have been beaten at all, and that there was no excuse either for the men or the generals, many of whom he promptly sacked. At that exhilarating sound of a Man talking at last, we turned to him instinctively as the savior of the situation; and since then he has been the only general in the field in whom there is any large and generous faith.

Yet it is still nervously assumed that the cads and idiots of England are the people of England, and that it is not patriotic, not safe, not favorable to military operations, to take them by the scruff of the neck and publicly give them the sound shaking their imbecile blackguardism deserves. Public men actually hide their virtues and pose as Bobadils when they are in fact quite reasonable and seemly persons.

I have seldom been so surprised as when I had the pleasure last autumn of hearing Mr Horatio Bottomley speak for the first time. I expected to hear—he had led me to expect to hear—a fire-eater. Never has a public man done himself a more wanton injustice. Had the British Army heard his address, every soldier would have fled weeping from the field. No lachrymatory shells ever discharged from a German gun could have produced such a sense of despair. Poor, lost, duped, silly England, conducting Herr Krupp's relatives through her dockyards and arsenals, and explaining all her secrets to them, whilst Mr Bottomley and his friend Edward VII vainly implored their country to beware, was depicted with a grieving sentimentality more depressing than the influenza. I smiled only once; and that was when Mr Bottomley told us, as a matter of which he had private knowledge, that the

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Archduke had been assassinated by the contrivance of the Kaiser. At the end, the appalled audience, instead of crying "Cheer up, old man: England is not dead yet; and we always do conduct strangers round our fortifications and shew them the obsolete guns and trust them with the secrets they know already," rose solemnly, and in a broken-hearted manner sang God Save the King, as indeed well they might had matters looked as black as Mr Bottomley painted them. But what concerns me here is the contrast between Mr Bottomley's press reputation and the style and matter of his speech. Most of it might have been delivered by Goldsmith's silver-haired village pastor. Indeed, with a little extra credulity the pastor might have delivered the whole of it; and the benediction at the end would have been quite in the key of the rest. If I had not been much more of a Jingo than Mr Bottomley, I should have come away convinced that no peace could be premature, and no terms more humiliating than we deserved. And yet on his press reputation Mr Bottomley unites in his single person all the pugnacity of the British bulldog, the Gallic cock, the eagle of Aspromonte, the lion of St Mark, the rugged Russian bear, and whatever symbols may express the unconquerable gallantry of the Belgians, the Serbians, the Portuguese, the Japanese, and (if Mr Venizelos returns to power) the Greeks.

Our consolation must be that if the picture of England which the press and the Party leaders have presented to us were true, or even approximately true, the war could not possibly go on for a single day: therefore it cannot be true. No soldier could be fed or armed; no train could start or arrive; cannons could have no shells, motor cars and bicycles no petrol, officers no maps, even if by a miracle there were any guns or officers or soldiers at all. As a matter of fact there is a huge output of English energy, intelligence, knowledge, thought, and organizing power at work getting things done and coping with the problems of the war. I could give instances. Why do I not? Simply because my knowledge is necessarily confidential: I am told these things on the understanding that I am not the Press, but a person of ordinary sense and discretion. If every stroke of public activity were to be

EARLY WAR REPUTATIONS

disclosed from day to day by irresponsible private persons, the inevitable end would be complete secrecy and consequently complete discouragement and unchecked panic. The proper channel of communication between the executive and the nation is the Government. It is the business of Mr Asquith and his colleagues from time to time to employ their powers of dramatic and descriptive oratory in shewing us what England is really doing and thinking. Unfortunately they do not seem to know what she is thinking or to understand what she is doing. The war is going on over their heads and behind their backs. They might be newspaper printers' devils for all they seem to know of the vital activities even of their own departments.

Take the most important question of all: the question of how to keep our industries on foot whilst we are drafting all our industrial effectives into the Army in an apparently reckless way under no better direction than that of tribunals of Dogberries, whose ignorance and folly is beyond the utmost extravagances of caricature, and committees of myopic skinflints, whose notion of national economy is to cut off our education, our locomotion, and our recreation: the three things which a really thrifty and hard-working nation never stints nor grudges, especially when war demands its most intense efficiency. That is absolutely all that the public knows about it, and apparently all that Mr Asquith knows. When sensible steps are taken we are told nothing of them. We were led into the war blindfolded by the policy of "Ask no questions and you will be told no lies"; and since then we have had humbug and hypocrisy and claptrap, stale perorations, gallery points, réchauffés of newspaper articles which were already putrid when they were first written, insolent suppression of poor malcontents and abject truckling to rich ones, until the mass of us who have no contact with our real effectives are driven to despair by our apparent but quite imaginary bankruptcy of character and ability.

If the England of the Press were the real England I should shake its dust from my feet and retire to the most desolate corner of my native land. But I am fortunate enough to be able to talk

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

occasionally to the people who are really running the war, both in the field and in the departments. Their contempt for the Press is almost equal to their contempt for the Party politicians; and in talking to them I am in a sane world of reality and possibility and activity, free from the asphyxiating vapors of spite and panic, greed and terror, Pecksniffery and Podsnappery, which rise and enfold us in paper clouds every morning and afternoon from Fleet Street. The Front Bench speeches in the Parliamentary debates ought to sweep these clouds away. But they only make them denser and more acrid.

I am an old journalist myself, and used to think Oscar Wilde much too particular when he complained that English journalists were not gentlemen. But now that the brave, good-humored, friendly, magnanimous ones have all gone soldiering, the only defence I can make of my profession is that we are no worse than Cabinet Ministers.

Meanwhile, has nobody a good word for England that is also a true word and a fearless?

CHAPTER VIII

COMPULSORY SOLDIERING

IN 1916 came compulsory military service, and with it the end of all the need for limiting discussion in the interest of voluntary recruiting, and of young women presenting young civilians with white feathers and singing "Oh we dont want to lose you; but we think you ought to go," which had a specially irritating effect in its cockney form of "Ow wee downt wornt—te le-oose yew —bat we thinkew orter gow." I remember making a private note that in war time only the most perfect speakers should be allowed to sing war songs.

The change went far deeper than that. It brought the war literally home to the nation. It made an end of the rhetoric about individual liberty with which the British have doped themselves for so many centuries. I can speak of the nineteenth at first hand. No article of faith was better established than that Englishmen would never stand conscription, whatever spiritless Frenchmen and Germans might put up with. In the twentieth we had to put up with it as helplessly as sheep have to put up with the shambles. Englishmen might have been galley slaves, for all their vaunted Democracy could do for them. They were torn from their farms, their businesses, their practices, their studios, with as little resistance as from the fields and factories in which they had no interest except their week's wages. I say nothing about their being torn away from their homes; for some of their homes were so unhappy that the man found the army a welcome change, whilst his wife revelled in her freedom and in her separation allowance: an undreamt-of luxury. But all the homes were not like that: in many of them the separation and the dread of the always possible telegram of death made compulsory soldiering a calamity which neither man nor wife would have endured if they had had the smallest choice in the matter. The war songs did not include the old one which promised that Britons never never shall be slaves: it was now too evident that they had never been anything else.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

But the old pretence was kept up by a clause in the Act which reserved the liberty of the Briton to refuse to serve if he had a conscientious objection to war. Only, lest all those who had not enlisted under the voluntary system should nullify compulsion by giving a conscientious complexion to their reluctance to serve, the authorities took care to make the lot of the Conshy, as he was called, much less eligible than that of the soldier. He was vigorously persecuted. When his maltreatment in prison resulted in his death, patriotic coroners' juries exonerated everyone concerned effusively. The local "competent" military authorities who had to decide in cases where exemption was claimed were sometimes men of intelligence and culture, sometimes insolent snobs, impenetrable blockheads, or both. In the west country a well-known opera composer was hustled contemptuously to barracks, where, however, he was promptly and sensibly made bandmaster. In the north country a youth who had once composed a waltz was exempted with a respect which would have left Handel nothing to complain of.

In my own case the question of conscientious objection did not arise: I was past military age. I did not counsel others to object, and should not have objected myself if I had been liable to serve; for intensely as I loathed the war, and free as I was from any illusions as to its character, and from the patriotic urge (patriotism in my native country taking the form of an implacable hostility to England), I knew that when war is once let loose, and it becomes a question of kill or be killed, there is no stopping to argue about it: one must just stand by one's neighbors and take a hand with the rest. If England had adopted me, as some of my critics alleged in their attempts to convict me of gross ingratitude, I could have pleaded that she must take the consequences without claiming any return; but as I had practically adopted England by thrusting myself and my opinions on her in the face of every possible rebuff, it was for me to take the consequences, which certainly included an obligation to help my reluctant ward in her extremity as far as my means allowed. Nevertheless I could not feel, as so many English people felt, that the conscientious ob-

COMPULSORY SOLDIERING

jector was a criminal for whom no punishment was too cruel. As to calling him a coward and a slacker because he was facing martyrdom and standing out against a whole nation of men who were letting themselves be driven like sheep into the trenches, that was a little too much for my sense of humor; for as far as the question was one solely of courage the Conshy was the hero of the war; and the man who would not enlist until he was forced was the coward. But the war knocked all such old romantic pretences out of us. It was, I think, the first war in which everyone confessed himself a coward: at least I have not met a single soldier who does not admit without the slightest shame that he suffered a good deal from acute funk from time to time. There was some feeling on the part of the soldiers against the men who had to be kept at home in civil employment at high wages: indeed in Italy this feeling rose to such a pitch of fury at the end of the war that it carried Signor Mussolini to Rome and made him dictator; but in England this sort of jealousy did not affect the Conshy: the soldier rather admired him for doing something that many a soldier would have liked to do but dared not; and he had certainly no good luck to envy. Nobody could deny that his conduct passed the Kantian "if everybody did as I am doing" test triumphantly. Indeed in my Commonsense I had myself begun by telling all the soldiers, friends and foes alike, that if they were not fools they would go home and mind their own business, leaving diplomats to fight out their quarrels as best they could, and that it was only because it was plain that they would not take this sensible advice that I had to accept the war as imposed on us by human folly and pugnacity. It is not surprising, then, that I soon felt obliged to intervene with my pen in protesting against cases of gross maltreatment or outrageously severe sentences.

It was a delicate business; for the objectors were a very mixed lot. They ranged from shirkers who had no self-respect to fanatical Protestants who would submit their private judgment to no external authority, and who, in their determination to be martyrs, deliberately created situations in which their military persecutors had either to do their worst or confess themselves beaten.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

I began by giving evidence at a court-martial which I must not attempt to describe, as the proceedings were so funny that no one would believe them possible, and also because, though I told the exact truth and nothing but the truth, my evidence convinced and was meant to convince the court that the prisoner was an Evangelical fanatic, whereas he was as a matter of fact a Freethinker. His case was quite genuine as a case of conscience; but a military court would not have held that a Freethinker could have a conscience; consequently it was necessary in the interests of justice to produce the evidence of fanaticism, of which there was plenty, and leave the court to infer that a fanatic must be a hyperpious Quaker.

I should not, however, trouble the public with the following reprints, if they had been mere appeals for sympathy with the persecuted objectors. Their sufferings were only grains of sand in a whole Sahara of atrocities in which babes and hardened ruffians, persons of the highest character and of the lowest, were "in one red burial blent." What I wish to keep in the public mind is that if we are to have compulsory military service—and I for one am in favor not only of compulsory service in time of war, but of compulsory civil service in time of peace—it should be instituted now, whilst we are at peace, with the most careful deliberation and the fullest discussion, and not left, as it was in 1916, to be rushed through as a panic measure which made the army a gigantic press gang, and yet created an extremely anomalous class of exempt persons without any attempt to define their qualifications or prescribe their treatment. This was all the more exasperating at the time because the Government was obviously yielding to pressure from France rather than acting on any considered opinion of its own that matters had yet come to conscription point. It had registered the population on some pretence as to rationing, and then denied that the registration had any reference to the possibility of conscription. War necessitates so much lying on the part of the belligerent governments to keep the people in blinkers that at last it becomes a reflex action: if anyone remarks at noon that it is twelve o'clock, some minister automatically arti-

COMPULSORY SOLDIERING

culates a solemn public assurance that there is no ground for any such suspicion, and gives private orders that references to the time of day are to be censored in future. I take it that the French Government, not having grasped this mendacity complex in spite of its own daily practice, took our denial seriously as a declaration of policy, and forthwith insisted on our calling our whole population to arms, whereupon the Prime Minister at once bolted to the opposite extreme of declaring that we must comply willy-nilly. Hence the following:

CONSCRIPTION

(*From The Nation, 29th January 1916*)

SIR: There has been a curious silence concerning the Prime Minister's blunt statement to Mr Joseph King that the Conscription Bill must be passed, no matter what the figures as to our industrial solvency may turn out to be. Surely this, coupled with the fact that the Government has made no pretence of estimating our resources in this connection, makes it clear that our Allies insist on the Bill.

A moment's examination of the position from the point of view of our Allies will shew how inevitable their demand has been. To make the point clear, let us suppose that Mr J. A. Hobson had taken the opportunity of M. Briand's recent visit to London to put his unanswerable economic case against Conscription to the French Premier. M. Briand's reply would have been quite simple. It would have been to the following effect:

"My dear Monsieur Hobson. Nobody understands better than we in France how thoroughly sound your arguments are. Beyond a doubt you cannot enlist another million and a half men and set aside yet another million and a half to maintain them in purely destructive activity at the rate of £300 a year per head—not to mention the subsistence of the second million and a half—without seriously damaging your trade. You will certainly suffer to that extent. And it would clearly be much pleasanter for you to maintain your productive power and financial solvency unim-

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

paired, so that at the conclusion of the war, with your conscript Allies and your conscript enemies equally ruined, you could step in with all your wonderful efficiency in full swing, and scoop in all the business they have been forced to sacrifice to the war. It is a magnificent programme—for *you*. But I appeal confidently to your famous British sense of fair play when I ask you to share our ruin as generously as you share our fighting; so that we shall all start fair when the war is over. That is why we have ventured to call on you to accept the same disabilities we have accepted in the form of conscription.”

This is unanswerable on Mr Hobson’s ground; for the damage he alleges is not only admitted, but claimed. But it requires some further consideration in view of the fact that foreign trade is a matter of life and death to us, whereas to our self-supporting Allies it is, in the last resort, dispensable. Yet what is actually happening is that Mr Hobson and Sir John Simon are arguing the case between Lord Kitchener and our Chambers of Commerce, whilst the real case as between the demand of our Allies and our peculiar insular position is left unargued, and Conscription carries the day. There was some excuse for this before Mr Asquith said flatly that the Bill would have to pass, no matter what the figures were. Now it is merely another variant of the familiar trick of getting things done under cover of talking about something else.

The above cannot be classed as one of my popular utterances. It had never occurred to any Briton that our course as to conscription was not entirely in our own hands. That it should be dictated to us by France as a handicap was a very disagreeable shock to our thoughtless self-sufficiency and pride of independence. And yet nothing could be more obvious and fair from the point of view of our Allies. We had to submit. It was only the beginning of a continuous international bickering as to whether we were taking our fair share of the cost of the war in life and money; whether

COMPULSORY SOLDIERING

we were holding enough of the front; whether our taxation was as drastic as the French taxation; whether we were shedding as much blood in perilous offensives, and so forth. The notion that military alliances promote cordial understandings is one of the most superficial of war illusions. One might as well suppose that property promotes good feeling in families. The blunt truth is that by the end of the war England and France were on far worse terms than England and Germany, not in the least because Englishmen and Frenchmen are natural enemies (as we used to say) but simply and inevitably because they were accomplices in an enormous crime against humanity, and could never agree as to their respective shares of either the effort or the plunder.

I had already made an attempt to induce the Government to think a little about what they were doing before letting themselves be driven into handing over the nation to military slavery without a single precaution against its abuse. It had no effect, because when war breaks out Governments have neither time nor energy nor daring to spare for thinking: they have to take military law as they find it: its reform is a peace job. Here is what I had written.

CONSCRIPTION SAFEGUARDS

(From the Daily News, 5th January 1916)

SIR: As, like the rest of the public, I have no information concerning the nature and extent of the special emergency which the Conscriptionists allege, and no conviction that it exists except in their imaginations, nor indeed any means of distinguishing those who want Conscription for its own sake from those who are being merely frightened into it, I have an open mind on the subject; for if the vital interests of the nation are really at stake we shall clearly have to resort to Conscription, just as we should have to resort to compulsory marriage, and even compulsory polygamy, if our population were reduced by war or otherwise to a dangerous degree, and our women refused to replenish it voluntarily on the ground that it did not seem worth while to breed men as food for cannon.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

I, therefore, must leave the question to be decided in Parliament on such good grounds as may be forthcoming. But at least I can point out that some of the reasons which have been already alleged as deserving weight, and even decisive weight, are the pretexts of poltroons. And we have had quite enough of civil poltroonery in this war already. Personally, I have been made to feel repeatedly as if I were in a rising balloon with a party of persons so frantic with terror that in their fear of the balloon falling they were throwing out their boots, their watches, their money, and their very souls after the barometer and the anchor, forgetting that there were plenty of sandbags, and that a handful of sand dropped would send them up a thousand feet. I have even been conscious that if I hesitated to throw out my fountain pen they might seize on me in their terror and throw me out, at the risk of sending themselves into the moon. These people would sacrifice all the liberties of England for reasons that would not justify a new lighting order; in fact, they have pretty nearly done so already. I therefore venture to warn the people who can keep their heads during a war against some of the excuses that are being made in advance for a cowardly surrender to save the trouble and responsibility of a well-weighed conclusion.

First, Conscription need not be introduced to redeem a pledge of Mr Asquith's to the married men of military age who were unenlisted when Mr Asquith gave it. The pledge, if it was a pledge, was clearly *ultra vires*. Mr Asquith has no more right to offer the unenlisted married men of England our present liberty to refuse military service than to offer them our hats. They must be presumed to have known this; and Mr Asquith must be presumed to have presumed that they knew it, and given his assurance and had it accepted subject to the perfectly well-understood limits which distinguish a British Premier from a Russian Tsar.

Second, Conscription must not be introduced merely because a general declares that it is necessary. It is the business of a general to think it is necessary, just as it is the business of a cobbler to think that there is nothing like leather. If we raised an army of twenty millions for our generals, and then asked them whether

COMPULSORY SOLDIERING

they would like another quarter million men, they would say Yes; and they would be quite right, as their business is to have big battalions and not to concern themselves about the civilian's part of the business, which is, to decide how many men we can afford for fighting purposes, and tell the generals that they must make good with that number and not a man more. Any fool can win at hazards if he has money enough to play double or quits; and any general can conquer the earth if he can snow his enemy under with unlimited dead. But fools have to learn, as some of us apparently still have to learn, that nobody is rich enough to play double or quits; and generals have to learn that not even an empire with a population of over four hundred millions can fight "to the last drop of its blood." You do not have to lose much blood to feel symptoms that remind you that you will faint, to say nothing of dying, long before you come anywhere near the last drop of your blood, or, for that matter, of the blood of your enemy.

The accepted figure for the full fighting force of a nation is ten per cent of its population. If the figure is wrong, as it quite possibly is, it had better be recalculated. Meanwhile, it seems probable that we can reach that figure without Conscription. Perhaps we have already reached it. If we have, all the demands of all the generals in the field for reinforcements will not justify us in going beyond it. If they cannot win with the ten per cent, they must just surrender: that is all. I doubt if they will. I am, in fact, in some anxiety lest the effect of our "attrition" may not be to force our enemies to drop their attacks in close formation and tell their general staff that it must fight with its brains, in which case they might retrieve a situation which, if we also laid a little more stress on ability and a little less on Conscription, would be a desperate one in spite of all their achievements.

In any case, Conscription should not be introduced or submitted to without the largest safeguards of the liberty of the subject. If it comes, it will come to stay: there will be no going back from it to the voluntary system; and indeed a lawfully regulated compulsion would be in many ways less oppressive than the sort of anarchic compulsion that has produced the alleged triumph of

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

volunteering since the war began. All these assurances that Conscription will be "for the war only," that dilution of labor will be "for the war only," that the industrial employment of women will be "for the war only" are not merely booby traps: they are the excuses by which our public men shirk the duty of providing for and safeguarding the future to which they are committing us in their plunging panics.

If the decision is to be Conscription, let it be faced, not as a temporary expedient, but as an advance in social organization; and let the citizen be guaranteed that when his turn comes to serve, he will serve as a citizen with all his rights intact, and not as the Hessian serfs and British wastrels of the Prussianized British army of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had to serve. It will take some pluck and principle to make the proper conditions for us; and too much of our at present somewhat slender civil stores of these qualities will be confined to the irreconcilable anti-Conscriptionists; but there ought to be a little left to spare for those who are prepared, if they find the case for Conscription irresistible, to stand out for honorable conditions instead of either dying uselessly in the last ditch or flying headlong at the first shot.

CHAPTER IX

THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

How necessary my vain appeal for a considered measure proved may be gathered from the following five letters which I was moved to write during the war. They cover only a few cases of prominent conscientious objectors who happened to have the very exceptional qualification of personal publicity to enable me to call public attention to their plight. What happened to the obscure can only be guessed.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

(*From The Nation, 27th May 1915*)

SIR: The case of Mr Chappelow is much more important than it appears in the statement made by himself and circulated by his friends. That statement produced so little impression on me when it was sent to me privately that I rather impatiently classed Mr Chappelow as a helpless person who had simply attempted to ignore the Act. This put Mr Chappelow on his mettle, and elicited from him the publicly significant facts, which are as follows:

Mr Chappelow not only took all possible steps to obtain exemption as a conscientious objector under the Act, but actually obtained it. Then, if you please, the military authority reclaimed him on the ground that if he would not fight, some use or other could be made of him in barracks, as he was an able-bodied young man in his twenties who was doing nothing for his country. And it was on this plea that he was recaptured.

Now some readers will say that the military authority was quite right. Apparently, the tribunal thought so. Let us see. Mr Chappelow was employed in the Education Department of the London County Council. The decision therefore meant that public education is of no service to the country; and that to take an educated man of special literary talent and aptitude from the work of national education, and to set him to sweep barracks, dig latrines,

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

or wait at table on an officers' mess is to effect a stroke of national economy which will materially help to win the war. The ignorant folly of such a conclusion would be disheartening enough even if Mr Chappelow were now actually sweeping the barracks or digging the latrines, which are quite honorable occupations, though no sane civil authority, nor even a military one not exceptionally stupid, would dream of wasting skilled intellectual workers on them. But Mr Chappelow is neither sweeping nor digging. He is not only eating his head off in prison, but holding up the labor and energy of other men guarding him, feeding him, book-keeping and reporting about him, and talking and writing a great deal of nonsense concerning his case. In view of so idiotic a result, I can only say that if the military authority is proud of itself, and feels that the Germans are reeling under the effects of its activity, its facility in self-satisfaction is to be envied.

If I were President of the Board of Education, and any military authority alive took a member of the national staff of education from his work and thrust him into a barrack on the ground that anything he could be set to do there was more important than education, I would have my man out with an abject apology, and that military authority lectured severely on the need for a little common sense, before the end of the week. I naturally expected our Minister to do something of the sort when the facts were placed before him. But he still has the fatal modesty of a Labor member who has not yet acquired the regular governing class touchiness on the departmental point of honor. He took it lying down; and, as far as he is concerned, Mr Chappelow may do his six months waste of the national resources unhindered. Indeed, he may spend the rest of his life in prison; for I presume that at the expiration of his sentence he will be returned to barracks, will again refuse to serve, will again be court-martialled, and again sent back to be a burden on the British taxpayer and a drain on British military energy, when he might be doing his work in the education department if people only had twopennorth of sense.

And here I may without irrelevance enter a warm defence of the Cabinet against the accusation (if it be one) that it is a Govern-

THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

ment of lawyers. It is certainly to some extent a Government of barristers, and shews it in its deference to Mr Lloyd George, who is a solicitor. Now barristers and solicitors have certain undeniable qualifications. The barristers know how to get round juries, and even how to humbug and flatter judges. The solicitors acquire after a time a considerable knowledge of court practice. But of the nature and history of law, and the conditions which experience has shewn to be necessary to the safe operation of law, they commonly know next to nothing. Even judges habitually say and do things at which the hair whitens on the heads of historians, philosophers, and genuine law students.

Before criticizing the Act now in question from this point of view, let me give one illustration, as to which no war feeling can arise, of what the Barrister-Government of the last ten years is capable of. When I was a lad the abuses and costs of legal procedure had become so intolerable that my father taught me that the command to turn the other cheek to the smiter meant that if a man robbed you of a pound it was cheaper to give him another pound to get rid of him than to go to law with him. Instead of reforming the law, England, then still individualistically infatuated with private enterprise, tried to meet the difficulty by setting up private justice in the form of arbitration. The result may be imagined. In point of fees, expenses, unrestrained licence to the bar, and amateur irresponsibility on the bench, an arbitration was soon found dearer and doubtfuller than ten lawsuits. And in the meantime the law partly reformed itself, and was partly reformed by Parliament. In England at least its abuses had either disappeared or become so far modified that it was cheap enough, expeditious enough, and reasonable enough to make recourse to its remedies quite worth while in many cases for people who could afford the luxury of litigation.

It was a Barrister-Government which for the first time ventured on the monstrous jobbery of inserting in Acts of Parliament clauses compelling litigants to go to arbitration, thus actually depriving them of their legal remedy. A real lawyer would have gone to the scaffold sooner than be a party to such an outrage.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

The Barrister-Politicians saw nothing in it but more fees for the Bar, more licence in pleading and examining, and an opportunity of assuring constituents that they need no longer fear law costs, and might sleep secure under the spell of the blessed word Arbitration.

Now for the so-called Conscription Act. It is an Act which creates an offence. A keen lawyer will at once ask what the penalty is to be for the offence. Not so our Cabinet barristers and their Premier solicitor. In remote ages, when the Church recognized that punishment is un-Christian, it saved appearances by handing over offenders to the secular arm. Our Government hands over the offender to the military arm, and washes its hands of him. And the military arm is considerably bothered by the problem of what to do with him. It tacitly invites the rank and file to have a lark with him in barracks, in the hope that if he is bullied and told that he will be shot next morning, and mobbed and pilloried and photographed in *The Daily Sketch* as Percy (all Percies are now—shade of Hotspur!—supposed to be cowards) he will, perhaps, stop giving trouble. When such treatment fails, the military authority sometimes, as far as I can gather, gives the objector up as hopeless, and tells him to take himself off. But mostly it court-martials him for insubordination, and pleases itself as to whether it sends him to prison for three, six, or twenty-four months. And there is nothing to prevent its shooting him if it has a fit of the childish temper that will not be contradicted by vulgar persons.

But the omission to define the penalty, unlawyerly as it is, is not so bad as the omission to define the obligation the breach of which constitutes the offence. I know a man who volunteered for military service early in the war, having a strong taste for cavalry soldiering. His health broke down and disabled him from militant work. He naturally wanted to return to civil work suited to his education and social standing. The military authorities pointed out that he was quite well enough to wait at mess; and, accordingly, when I last heard of him, he was handing round Brussels sprouts and brandy to officers at the Curragh. Now this clearly is not military service, but unlimited slavery. Ostensibly, we com-

THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

pel a man to fight for his country. Actually, we compel him to do whatever his commanding officers order him to do, even when the order is an intentional and infuriating degradation, as, for instance, when an officer, seeing a private dining in the same restaurant, orders him to stand to attention in the hall for daring to frequent a place where gentlemen dine. If a devout Churchman, he may be ordered to read chapters of Ingersoll and Bradlaugh to a wounded atheist. He may be used for purposes of pure pageantry like a footman. He may be ordered to have his blood poisoned by the most abominable inoculations, even if he has heard of the 97,000 disease-disabled soldiers in Gallipoli concerning whom the Government has not dared to publish statistics. He has no rights of any sort, and can be imprisoned or shot without trial-by-jury for offences which can be forced on him by a malicious officer. Like a dog in a country house, he may receive the greatest kindness from his officers, but if he claims the rights of a man, or appeals to the sacred equality of public service, woe betide him!

These being the traditions of the Army, inherited from the time when private soldiers were a servile class, it is obviously necessary to define military service very carefully if the nation is to be fully reconciled to it. If the Cabinet were not dominated by barristers I should therefore urge, not for the first time, that the new Act should define the service and prescribe the penalty for refusing it, whether that penalty be burning alive or forty-shillings-or-a-month. As it is, now that Lord Haldane is no longer in the Cabinet, any such suggestion would be unintelligible to ministers.

It must not be inferred that I am justifying the logical position of the Conscientious Objector. In that matter I am entirely on the side of Lady Ophelia, whose Socialist position is logically unassailable. The State has beyond all question the same right to put Mr Clifford Allen into the Army, however much he may dislike it, as it has to put Lady Ophelia into a munition factory during the war, and thereafter into a laundry or jam factory until she is seventy and retires on an old-age pension. In these strenuous times, when the Hun is at the gate, the question is not why Mr

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Clifford Allen and Mr Norman are not in the trenches, but rather why Lord and Lady Ophelia are at large doing what they like. I go further than her ladyship; for she suggests that the objectors should shirk their duty by retiring to a desert island (which they would, perhaps, be glad enough to do if they were allowed to), whereas I recognize the logic of refusing them the blue paper without which they cannot leave the country for a desert island, or even for an inhabited one. The Germans and Lady Ophelia are strictly rational: the individual must give way to the State; and when Mr Chappelow objects to wear khaki, the State has as much right to overcome his objection by force as the American States had to overcome the objection of the Dukhobors to wear any clothes at all.

But—for there is a but—the art of government is not the art of arranging human life syllogistically. I will undertake to prove up to the hilt that both I and Lord Ophelia would be better dead, both from the point of view of our own peace and that of the country; but I am not prepared to commit patriotic suicide on that account, nor do I think that Lady Ophelia would immolate her husband on the altar of her country as she wishes to immolate the Conscientious Objectors. Before committing ourselves to a general proposition in politics in our enthusiasm for a particular application of it that happens to suit us at the moment, we should consider whether it may not be susceptible of future applications which would be extremely disagreeable.

For example, the war is killing out millions of human beings at the very moment when it is demonstrating that population is the very backbone of military strength. Yet there are in this country large numbers of women of child-bearing age and sound constitution living in religious houses in obdurate celibacy. There is not a single argument in favor of compelling Conscientious Objectors to serve in the Army that is not also an argument for enacting that if these women do not within a year supply the country with a baby apiece they will be punished. And there is no possible justification for proceeding in the case of a Conscientious Objector, not by specified penalty, but by actual physical com-

THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

pulsion to do the thing prescribed, that would not justify a similar compulsion applied to a recalcitrant nun. Indeed, the case for compelling the nun is enormously stronger; for no sophistry can exalt the public utility of killing a foreigner above that of creating an Englishman. And yet—and yet—does Lady Ophelia feel quite convinced about it? She could put every one of her posers to a contumacious nun; and they would all be as unanswerable as they are in her letter to *The Nation*. I hold no brief for the convent: I should like to see all the nuns happily married, with their laps full of infant Britons. I should inspect convents remorselessly as an alternative to treating them as Henry VIII and M. Combes treated them. I should exempt neither nun nor priest from the common obligations laid on the rest of the community. All the same, if a nun conscientiously objected to compulsory maternity, I should recognize that I was up against something that had to be respected, and should star her for celibate service in her own vocation, or provide some other means of evasion.

I am not here quite so far from practical possibilities as some of our compulsionists may think. The time has come when we shall have to maintain the population, if it is to be maintained, either by endowing voluntary parentage, or else making four children a condition of the marriage licence, and enforcing the condition by severe penalties when its fulfilment is possible, and by dissolution of the marriage when it is not. I could open an appalling vista of coming compulsions before the women and the men turned forty-one who are at present so anxious to see everyone else stabbing sacks with bayonets in preparation for the trenches. If, when their own turn comes, they feel nothing but an overwhelming anarchistic indignation at the interference with their personal liberty, it will not console them very much to remember that they themselves asked for it—for other people.

My conclusion is that the Conscientious Objector clause, though very bad logic, is very good sense, and could save us a great deal of trouble and waste of energy if some of its good sense could be slipped into the heads of the tribunals and the military authorities.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Finally, will Lady Ophelia allow me to reinforce her citation of the expulsion of the money-changers from the Temple as an illustration of the recently-discovered violent and warlike character of the central figure by a less hackneyed incident which also suggests the employment of physical force by Jesus? He went into a Jewish synagogue and made a strong and ironic pro-Gentile speech. Thereupon the Jews "were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way." It is not quite clear how he could have passed through the midst of them without, like Mr Ponsonby at Richmond, making a vigorous use of his fists; and if Lady Ophelia puts that construction on the fourth chapter of Luke, I do not see how any one can conscientiously object.

(*From The Western Daily Press, 29th August 1916*)

SIR: I am an old advocate of compulsory service, and have been vehemently denounced for it by many of its recent converts; but it will not survive the war unless the gentlemen who act as military authorities on our Tribunals can be induced to understand that soldiering is not the only necessary occupation in the world, and that a nation which sent its entire population to the trenches, which appears to be the military ideal in some quarters, would eat its last ration and fire its last shot within a week as a preliminary to unconditional surrender to a more intelligently organized enemy.

There are, fortunately, limits to this kind of stupidity. No practical soldier can be unaware of the fact that an army moves on its belly. What he is sometimes unaware of is that it must move on its brains also if it is to have any luck against cultivated commanders, and against a rank and file that can amuse itself in more healthy ways than in drink and debauchery. You can drive even the stupidest military authority to admit that he must leave us some bakers and tailors as well as some ammunition workers; but when you suggest that a reserve of teachers and artists is no less essential in a modern nation you sometimes come up against a

THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

crass Philistinism which has never even heard of the celebrated mistake of the French revolutionary tribunal which cut off Lavoisier's head on the ground that "the Republic has no need of chemists," and which honestly, but disgracefully, does not know that fine art and liberal education as distinguished from instruction and drill have any social or military value. Our military authorities have too often been brought up without knowledge of or access to fine art, the only real mental recreator. They have been driven by mere boredom to frivolity or vice for amusement, and to sport for pastime and health. They believe therefore that fine art is frivolous, vicious, and out of place in war time, and that all a man needs to be a complete Englishman is football in peace, fighting in war, and a formula about his duty to King and country to save himself the trouble of thinking.

Lest I should be accused of exaggeration, let me quote the utterance which has provoked me to make this protest. I have been spending a week in the West Country, attracted by a Musical Festival in the ancient city of Glastonbury. Here I find that a British composer, Mr Rutland Boughton, has, by extraordinary ability and perseverance, succeeded in founding a school of music and in presenting a series of elaborate and highly serious musical and dramatic entertainments, carried out in all their details by native talent. He has attracted dramatic singers of international reputation who have come to help him as volunteers; and what is more, he has been able to place beside them pupils of his own who have sustained the comparison so well that I do not hesitate to say, as an old and experienced musical critic, that they could not have been replaced with advantage from the most famous centres of musical culture in Germany or Russia.

Now I do not support Mr Boughton's enterprise on the ground that "it brings money to the town." If it does, poor Mr Boughton gets very little of it, certainly less than it costs him on any reasonable valuation of a professional man's time. The vital point is that the citizens of Glastonbury can now hope to see their sons and daughters grow up as cultivated Englishmen and Englishwomen, with refined senses, cultivated intelligences, developed sym-

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

pathies, and pleasures that are ennobling instead of degrading and destructive. It would be absurd to attempt to estimate Mr Boughton's value to his country in respect of this public work of his in pounds, shillings, and pence, though in Germany he would be in the public service, with a specially respected position and a pension. His value as a soldier is in comparison negligible.

Yet when Mr Boughton appeals for exemption from military service on the ground that he can serve his country better by continuing his present work, the military authority, whose name I charitably withhold, declares contemptuously (not to say snobbishly) that Mr Boughton's work is, in his view, "not of the least national importance." Observe: not relatively important (an excusable view for a soldier who naturally thinks there is nothing like pipeclay) but *not of the least* importance. The gentleman brings down his jack boot squarely on the fine arts, and blots them all out with one stamp. "Not of the least national importance!" He is not a bit apologetic. He snubs not only Mr Boughton, but Sir Edward Elgar and Sir Frederick Pollock. "The distinguished patronage Mr Boughton has secured seems to me beside the question." "I really can't appreciate that Mr Rutland Boughton's Music and Drama School of Opera (*sic*) is of such importance that the Army should be kept waiting for his services."

I repress my natural impulse, as an artist and man of letters, to describe this as pompous insolence. I recognize it as honest barbarism. But I ask, is the Army really being "kept waiting" for Mr Boughton's services? Are we really being held back from Bapaume because the British Expeditionary Force is paralyzed by the absence of a solitary man of thirty-eight, no bigger physically than Beethoven or Wagner, who can handle a grand piano or a conductor's baton like a master, but does not know the right end of a gun from the wrong one? Is it true that General Haig cannot make shift without him; for that is what "kept waiting" means if it means anything? And was the Tribunal at Bath justified in refusing to allow Mr Boughton even to appeal to the Central Tribunal on the ground of this alleged military emergency?

Finally, is this military authority really a military authority in

THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

the sense of representing the considered opinions of the high military command which has asked for and received from us an unprecedented and almost unlimited trust? Or is there some shortage of adequate military representatives for the Tribunals; and has Mr Rutland Boughton been unlucky enough to run up against one of the shortages?

(*From The Nation, 25th November 1916*)

SIR: May I again point out the cruel absurdities in which we have been landed by a Government which, though dominated by professional lawyers, makes all the blunders in legislation that their legal education is supposed to guard them against?

First, our legislators create a new crime. Then, instead of enacting a penalty for its breach, they hand the criminal over to the military so that he may be physically coerced into compliance with the law, an unprecedented proceeding of which a committee of bargees would, I hope, be intellectually ashamed. A few sensible and well-instructed officers decline to have this schoolboy ruffianism imposed on their honorable profession, and return the offender for proper judicial treatment by the proper authority. Others, as thoughtless as the legislators themselves, proceed to kick, spit at, bully, strip, starve, straitwaistcoat, and otherwise torture the offenders into compliance with the law, which was precisely what the Government must have meant them to do, if it took the trouble to mean anything. The Government then sacrifices the officers to outraged public opinion, notably superseding and virtually cashiering a particularly zealous colonel, denounced to the press by a conscientious objector who managed to smuggle a note out of cells. The officers are naturally furious. They drop the business of physical coercion, and take on themselves the power of an ordinary criminal court of summary jurisdiction, dealing out sentences of imprisonment as if they were ordinary magistrates. Thus the mere force of fact and human nature produces a rough substitute for the legal and orderly state of things which the Government should have carefully instituted.

What are the objections to this substitute? It wastes the time

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

of the Army and makes it odious at the very moment when it is vitally important that it should not spend a moment on anything but military efficiency, and should enjoy the maximum of popularity. It is set down to try cases in which it cannot possibly be, or even pretend to be, impartial. A man like Stephen Hobhouse says to them and to their German adversaries alike: "Sirs, ye are brothers: wherefore do ye wrong one to another?" He is their accuser; and instead of being put on their defence, they are appointed to try him, and given powers to suppress and imprison him. There is no precedent for this. The Conscientious Objector to vaccination, in the worst days of the Jennerian persecution, was at least not tried by the General Medical Council. When Dr Clifford refused to pay rates to support Church schools he was not summoned before Convocation. In high treason cases, it is true, the arraigned State is judge, jury, and executioner; but, pending the establishment of supernational courts, there is no alternative. In this case of military service there is an alternative; and its denial is the greater scandal because it has been apparent throughout this war that the Army is nervously determined to assert and maintain its supremacy in war-time by disregarding Ministerial pledges, and on principle treating civilian clauses in Acts of Parliament as scraps of paper, even when their observance and enforcement could do no harm. The peculiarity of Mr Stephen Hobhouse's case is that he is the Conscientious Objector *par excellence*, perhaps the one case the war has produced in which the genuineness of the objection is visible to everybody, and unquestionable by even the most Hun-terrified quibbler to whom every footstep at night is that of a Pomeranian grenadier. If Mr Hobhouse is imprisoned for a single hour, the law is broken and the good faith of the Government discredited. And this is just why the military authorities feel it to be essential that they should take him, above all others, and larn him, and incidentally larn Mr Asquith, to be a toad.

It is nothing to the point that a civil tribunal might have behaved worse than the military one, without its excuse. I am calling attention to a gross constitutional abuse, not pleading for Mr

THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

Stephen Hobhouse, whose war record, as Mr Cottrell pointed out in your columns last week, and as many of us knew well before that, is an honor to his country.

(*From The Manchester Guardian, 12th June 1917*)

SIR: The announcement that a sentence of two years hard labor has been passed upon Mr Clifford Allen raises the question whether the Press and public, in accepting the news without protest or comment, are acting advisedly, or only in that ignorance of public routine of which we have had so many staggering examples during the war.

In point of severity imprisonment with hard labor is the most severe form of incarceration practised in England. A sentence of two years of it is regarded as reaching the limit of endurance: only when the offence is of such a nature as to provoke the court to do its worst is it resorted to. Eighteen months is a very severe sentence; and even a year indicates a pretty emphatic opinion that the prisoner is a pronounced rogue and ruffian. When terms of imprisonment exceeding two years are called for the prisoner is sent to penal servitude. The difference is that a prisoner at the end of two years hard labor is in a state of exhaustion which could not be prolonged without endangering his life, whereas penal servitude has to be so ordered that men can endure ten or even twenty years of it without physical collapse.

It must therefore be clearly understood that a prisoner can be killed by sentencing him to hard labor for a continuing offence and renewing his sentences as they expire. Thus Mr Clifford Allen, having already served a severe term of hard labor, on the expiration of which he is immediately sentenced to two years further hard labor, and will presumably be sentenced to two more if he survives it, and so on for the rest of his life, is virtually under sentence of death by exhaustion, starvation, and close confinement.

Is this the intention of the Government, the military authorities, and the nation? If so, there is nothing more to be said. It may be so; for it is a matter of daily experience that many people who

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

are taking advantage of their age and sex to do not only less public work than Mr Clifford Allen and Mr Stephen Hobhouse did long before the war put any pressure on them, but no public work at all, think that such a death is too good for a conscientious objector, and do not hesitate to say as much. But are these vicarious zealots in the majority? May not the absence of protest be merely the ignorance of the respectable man who knows nothing of prisons and criminal law, and has no idea that Mr Allen is being treated with a new and quite abnormal frightfulness?

One other point. Why are the scruples and personal rights of the objectors treated with pedantic respect when they operate to the disadvantage of the objector, and overridden by force when they have the contrary effect? Mr Stephen Hobhouse is sharing Mr Clifford Allen's fate because he refuses to submit to a medical examination. Why was he not examined by force? Objectors refusing to put on uniform have been forcibly clad. Women refusing their dinners have been forcibly fed. Your columns have just reported the case of an invalid recruit who was stripped naked for an hour and a half and forcibly prevented from sitting near the fire. He is now dead. Yet when Mr Hobhouse objects, his wishes and his person are regarded as sacred; and the authorities, deplored his obstinacy, consign him to hard labor for life. Mr. Hobhouse, as a man with a proved and unmistakable vocation for the Samaritan life, is just the sort of person who might very well have some decisions taken out of his own hands to avoid the scandal of his martyrdom; but the military authorities have suddenly set up a conscience concerning him which they had better have deferred until his case was disposed of.

Anyhow, here are two gentlemen in a fair way to be killed because the public has no knowledge and the authorities no sense. If we wish to kill them, cannot we shoot them out of hand and have done with it, Dublin fashion?

(*From The Manchester Guardian, 15th March 1918*)

SIR: Some time ago you allowed me to call attention in your columns to the fact that the routine of military law, co-operating

THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

with the Acts establishing compulsory military service, was extending the extreme sentence of the criminal law in hard-labor cases from two years, which was regarded as the limit of human endurance and was reserved for the vilest offenders, to perpetual hard labor: that is, virtually, to death. That I did not exaggerate was presently proved in the cases of two prisoners whose names I gave. As far as my letter was an appeal on their behalf it was quite ineffective. In spite of the strongest social influence brought to bear by the relatives of one of the victims, and of considerable agitation in the press and in Parliament, the prison machine would not release the two men caught in its *engrenage*, because, being a machine, it could not.

But when it became evident that one of the two was dying he was hastily thrust out of prison to die in a nursing home. The other declared to a visitor that he was being sustained by his intercourse with Jesus Christ. This came under the machine's definition of insanity; and he, too, was committed to the care of his relatives. Both these gentlemen recovered; and their cases may be considered, let us hope, as happily disposed of.

But there are more than seventy others who have already suffered two years hard labor, and have not the faintest prospect of being released until they, too, are thrown out, like dying bees from a hive, to save the prison authorities the trouble of burying them. Nobody desires this result. Nobody intended it. The few intemperate and silly people who cry "Serve them right: they ought to be shot" say the same of Lord Lansdowne or Lord Northcliffe, according to their politics, just as they said it of Dr Lyttelton and the Archbishop of York, and are probably now saying it of Sir Douglas Haig because he writes about his enemies like a gentleman, and not like a welsher. On the Continent and in South America, where the handing over of political offenders to military tribunals is an established method of party assassination, these cases produce the very impression we are most anxious to avoid: that is, that we are, in spite of our professions of devotion to popular liberty, really ruled by our officers' messes working hand in hand with reactionary politicians. We cannot

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

explain that what is the matter is simply our stupid helplessness face to face with a purely accidental and unintended operation of our badly co-ordinated machinery. Thus we are getting nothing out of this senseless cruelty but discredit and discontent. And there is nothing but sheer inertia and incompetence to prevent us from applying to conscientious objectors the protection from excessive rigor enjoyed by burglars, incendiaries, homicides, child-torturers, and utter unmentionables. We are drowning in public odium, and, like Ophelia, are incapable of our own distress, to say nothing of the distress of the perpetual prisoners.

The question will be stirred up again by the case of Mr Clarence Henry Norman. It happens that I and the editor of *The New Age* were once called as witnesses to establish the fact that Mr Norman was not a slacker, but a man whose faith, long before the war, had led him to all possible legal lengths, including unmeasured denunciation of ourselves personally for not sharing it with him. Mr Norman, recollecting this quaint service, and knowing that you had opened your columns to me on the subject of these life sentences when other papers had been less concerned for public liberty, and perhaps less courageous, wrote to me on the occasion of his recent arrest and begged me to watch what might happen to him. His offence, he said, was that, being a conscientious objector on alternate service at Dartmoor, and being accustomed to act as secretary for the other objectors in such affairs as they are allowed to organize among themselves, he became concerned in the one-day strike which they carried out by way of protest against the treatment of the late Mr H. W. Firth. Mr Firth, it seems, had diabetes, which was diagnosed as malingering (probably through quite sincere medical crudity, for ordinary doctoring is still in the Dark Ages as to diagnosis), with the result that he died.

Now I hold no brief for Mr Norman in this matter of the strike. The case of Mr Firth was submitted to that thoroughly democratic institution a coroner's jury. The jury heard the evidence, and exonerated the authorities; so there is nothing more to be said: a one-day strike cannot inculpate them. I simply note, as

THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

requested, that Mr Norman has been tried by a court-martial, and sentenced to a year of hard labor.

What, then, is his grievance? It is that this sentence, nominally a sentence of hard labor for one year, is really a sentence of hard labor for life under conditions so severe that his life is not likely to be a very long one. At the end of the year he will be released, and immediately given an order which, as a conscientious objector, he is morally bound to disobey. For that disobedience he will be sentenced to two years more. At the end of the two years, if he still survives, the process will be repeated. And so on until the point is reached at which he will either die in prison or be expelled from it so that he may die outside.

I submit that this is an intolerable state of affairs. If we desire that Mr Norman shall be killed because he is so troublesome or because he refuses to expend his patriotic pugnacity on the Germans instead of on our Foreign Office, by all means let us hang him or shoot him in the correct constitutional manner. If we think a year of hard labor too little for the crime of being privy to a one-day strike from wasted labor, then let him have five years, ten years, twenty years penal servitude, and have done with it. We shall at least be doing what we intend, and know that we are doing it; and our action will have a corresponding moral effect on the other objectors. The present procedure, which, I repeat, nobody foresaw, intended, or approves of, will make him a martyr. And he will be a very obstreperous martyr. The rest of the seventy-odd may drop like stones into the sea and be forgotten and unpitied; but Mr Clarence Norman, who gave the authorities one bad fall at the beginning of his career as a conscientious objector by communicating with the outside world in defiance of all precautions, may be depended on not to suffer in dignified and melancholy silence.

After all, we have to admit that it is always the troublesome people who force us to remedy the abuses that we lazily let slide. I hope it will prove so in the present instance.

CHAPTER X

JOY RIDING AT THE FRONT

EARLY in 1917 I received an invitation from the British Commander-in-Chief, then Sir Douglas Haig, to visit the front and say my say about it. I felt this as a call, which I was not free to refuse, to such service as I was able to perform in the way of my profession. I equipped myself with a pair of trench boots and a tunic and breeches of khaki, in which I looked neither like a civilian nor a soldier, but in which I was supposed to be invisible to the enemy's marksmen. H. V. Massingham warned me that he had been almost turned back and sent home because the black of his civilian clothes shewed for an inch beneath his khaki trench overcoat. H. G. Wells told me to take waders, as I should have to walk knee-deep through the Flanders mud.

When I arrived on the field of battle I found that these precautions were entirely wasted. Flanders was virgin white in its mantle of snow. The temperature averaged about 17° F.; and I came home without a speck of mud on the trench boots. At the Pozières windmill I was in the company of a Roumanian General in very smart dove colour, with a cap beside which the most gorgeous macaw would have looked like a London sparrow. His son was of the party and looked almost as conspicuous. C. E. Montague, who was in responsible charge of us, stopped when a shell burst half a mile away, and remonstrated. "But" said the General "on the snow it is I who am invisible, whilst you two gentlemen [Montague and Shaw] are conspicuous in your khaki." This was so obviously true that Montague had to shrug his shoulders and lead on.

The German artillerists took no advantage of the situation as far as I was concerned. The battle seemed to me unaccountably onesided. Our guns worked away industriously, the heaven-rending energy of the guns and the whizzing rush of the shells contrasting quaintly with the languid boredom of the gunners as they screwed in the fuses, hoisted the shells into the guns, and

JOY RIDING AT THE FRONT

pulled the string, letting another steel comet loose in space without a pretence of conviction that it would arrive anywhere in particular or of concern as to whether it did or not. At first I expected their efforts to provoke a thundering retaliative cannonade from the embattled central empires, an expectation which gained a mild thrill from the possibility that their first efforts to find the range might land on my epigastrium; but no: our bombardment did not elicit a single remonstrance: it was like the imaginary battles of my childhood, in which I was always victorious and the enemy fell before my avenging sword without getting in a single blow. I demanded explanations. The first reply was "Oh, they have not been doing much counter battery work lately." Another was "They will start firing on Albert at three o'clock." Nobody knew the truth, which was that the Germans had retreated quietly to the Hindenburg line and left us to waste our ammunition on their empty trenches. In short, the Somme battlefield was very much safer than the Thames Embankment with its race of motors and trams. Only in Ypres and perhaps in Arras could I flatter myself that I was to any perceptible extent under fire. I did not see yellow as Goethe did on the field of Valmy and Wagner in the Dresden insurrection. I suffered much more from funk during the air raids in London, where I was too lazy to leave my bed and take refuge in the cellars or the nearest underground railway station, as the more energetic citizens did.

I recall one moment of apparent peril as shewing how unconscious men may be of their instinctive actions. The Commander-in-Chief had taken me with him to see a great display of the latest contrivances in flame projection, incendiary showers of thermit, and poison gas discharge. The thermit shower was produced by firing from Stokes guns a cloud of shells packed with it. I was standing with Haig amid an imposing group of officers on a highway, beside which the ground dropped straight down to an emplacement seven or eight feet below, on which were ranged the Stokes guns; so that they were right under our noses. Their first volley was a wonder of pyrotechny: it produced

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

a vast curtain of white incandescence of dazzling brilliancy, and—at least so we were assured—of such incredibly high temperature that hell itself would have shrivelled up in it. This sounded impressive; but the older officers were contemptuous, declaring that the stuff cooled so suddenly that you could pick it up when it touched ground and put it in your pocket “like a fourpenny bit” (a coin I had not seen since early childhood) with perfect impunity. Nevertheless the military love of display insisted on a second volley; and this time one of the guns immediately beneath us, instead of hurling its fiery shell joyously into the skies, gave a sickly cough and tossed it about twenty feet up, from which eminence it began returning to the toes of the gunner, where it seemed inevitable that it must explode and consume us all like stubble.

Now on the evidence of my own senses I am prepared to swear that neither I nor any of that dignified group of commanding officers budged an inch. Our *tenue* was splendidly undisturbed: the example we set of heroic imperturbability in danger was perfect. Only, I noticed that we were now all at the other side of the road. On the evidence of that fact we must have scuttled like rabbits. On the evidence of my own consciousness I had not flinched; and the others certainly looked as if they had stood like statues. Fortunately the shell had not exploded: it was a dud. I can only hope that I did not head the retreat.

The flame projection was very horrible: the contents of a huge array of barrels of kerosene swept through a half circle of about 80 feet radius, devouring everything there in an ugly stinking rush of smoke and murky fire. But as it must have taken at least twentyfour hours to build up the contrivance, which was a clumsy affair after all, I privately concluded that it was neither practicable in the face of an active enemy nor worth while. The portable flame throwers, about which recent German experiments had made Haig anxious, were obviously first attempts, hopeless except as instruments for self-cremation. Even the poison gas shewed its most obvious limitation when an officer came up to Haig and apologized for having exhibited only two clouds of it

JOY RIDING AT THE FRONT

(they were white and visible), his excuse being that any more would be a little hard on the two friendly villages towards which they were drifting.

I enjoyed my tour of the Flanders front all the more because modern war is so appallingly tedious that a person of any conversational powers (and I am an incorrigible talker) is more welcome than he could ever be anywhere else. I talked and talked and talked until poor Montague, in whose charge I was, must have learnt all my conversational stunts by heart. But his patience was inexhaustible. When I would apologize after repeating the very same string of sallies and pseudo-imromptus and stories and dicta on the war at the fourth or fifth mess table he would assure me affectionately that it always sounded fresh. I did not come across any of the drunken foulmouthed colonels who figure in recent war books; and I doubt if any such men could have imposed on me by a mask of company manners. I took away a favorable impression of the colonels who entertained me. As to my intercourse with the high command, I thought it would be limited to lunching with Haig and accompanying him on the afternoon expedition to the pyrotechnic display; but he insisted on my seeing Rawlinson, with whom I had a long talk on the following day.

I was aware that scrupulous discretion would be necessary in dealing with anything they might say to me, and that it was therefore possible that they might say very little, and that little of the most banal kind. But they put no apparent restraint on their war-intensified communicativeness. Though they must have known, if they had bothered to think about it, that no censorship could muzzle me effectively, they talked with a freedom reckless enough to make it impossible for me to report a single word of their conversation. Haig, surfeited with illustrious visitors, was interested only in Mr Ben Tillett, whom he had found the best company of them all. He was clearly uneasy about the influence of Lord Northcliffe, one of whose correspondents (since deceased) had in an article given away the position of an English battery. The Germans promptly wiped it out; yet Haig had not been able

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

to get rid of him. Northcliffe's latest feat at that moment had been the shelving of Kitchener; and when I said that however necessary that operation may have been it was appalling that it should have been in the power of an irresponsible commercial adventurer like Northcliffe, and of Northcliffe alone, to perform it, Haig did not demur.

He seemed to me a first rate specimen of the British gentleman and conscientiously studious soldier, trained socially and professionally to behave and work in a groove from which nothing could move him, disconcerted and distressed by novelties and incredulous as to their military value, but always steadied by a well closed mind and an unquestioned code. Subject to these limitations he was, I should say, a man of chivalrous and scrupulous character. He made me feel that the war would last thirty years, and that he would carry it on irreproachably until he was superannuated.

Rawlinson, whom he evidently cherished, was as unlike him as it is possible for one British officer to be unlike another. Rawlinson's mind, as far as it went (and it was quite a lively one) was open and unstiffened. He was frank; his manners were his own; and he had no academic illusions about the situation, which was not then a very rosy one; for the recent Somme offensive had come to nothing but a very superfluous demonstration of the homicidal uselessness of sending waves of infantry to attack barbed wire defended by machine guns, even after the costliest bombardments and minings.

In the active sectors I saw no officers whom I could guess as incompetent: no doubt they had been weeded out by that time. At the training camp at Étaples I had momentary glimpses of elderly dug-outs hurrying round with an earnest sense of their duty to their country, easily mistaken by the lookers-on for mere self-importance. Their chief occupation seemed to be to present themselves urgently at the staff offices for interviews with the chiefs, and to be put off on all sorts of pretexts by agreeable subalterns. They meant well, and sincerely believed they were helping to win the war; but from that point of view they had

JOY RIDING AT THE FRONT

better have stayed at home. At Étaples I saw, too, the sergeants instructing circles of recruits in the use of the bayonet, with comments intended to inspire them with blood lust, but more effective in maintaining a grinning goodhumor among the novices, many of whom, in civilian dress and spectacled, imparted a bank holiday air to the proceedings. I was taken through a trench in which a tear shell had been exploded, and came out weeping profusely. But there was no thrill about Étaples, or indeed in any place out of earshot of the guns.

I overstayed my permit to spend a day with Sir Almroth Wright at Wimereux and in Boulogne, where in the hospital wounded men were being operated on in all sorts of odd corners, and those who had been attended-to and were safe in bed seemed so glad to be there and not in the trenches that nothing that the operating surgeons could do could dispel the general cheerfulness. Wright was, as usual, extraordinarily interesting; but when I congratulated him on the success of his famous saline treatment of wounds he opened my eyes by a single opening of his own to the folly of supposing that the wholesale butcheries of war leave time for delicately scientific novelties in surgery.

The chateau for distinguished visitors at which I was billeted was run with first rate tact and efficiency by an officer named Roberts, whom I should unhesitatingly have appointed Commander-in-Chief on his merits. I spent an evening at another chateau, where all the war correspondents were, among them Beach Thomas, who surprised me by saying that the British man ~~ever~~ could beat any soldier on earth. This was so very much ~~end~~ of tune with the prevailing disparagement of everybody ~~except~~ the enemy that I asked his reason. "In modern war" he replied "the sheep will always beat the lion. If you order the British soldier to drive on the right he will drive within a foot of the hedge. The French soldier, two feet. The Belgian soldier, three feet. But the American soldier will declare with oaths that no ensanguined staff car is going to pass him on the road, and will drive all over the place. And that is why the British soldier will always beat the lot." This perhaps explains why the American

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

troops were brigaded under French command for so long. I learnt afterwards from an American major that when General Pershing at last insisted on the United States army being left to take care of itself, its lines of communication immediately jammed and became impassable for 48 hours. Fortunately the Germans were not informed of its predicament.

A night at Robert Loraine's flying camp, which seemed to me an obvious and completely exposed mark for the German aces, passed in perfect peace. My professional instincts were all against an actor of Robert's mark being a crude real colonel running real risks and receiving real wounds instead of artistically simulated ones. I needed him for something more important. I missed my boat next morning, purposely as he thought, but really because the excitement and novelty of a journey to a fighting section made it seem less than quarter of its real distance and duration: it was always ten miles there and thirty or forty back.

When I was home again and had presented my trench boots to a clergyman, I had to consider how to fill a dozen columns of The Daily Chronicle with an account of my experiences which would tell the enemy nothing that he did not know already better than I, and that would help the general reader, by this time badly discouraged by the duration of the war and the absence of any prospect of its ending, to stick it. The appallingly slaughterous British offensives that just stopped short of getting there; the bombarded coast towns about which our authorities lied so heroically; the holocausts of British youth sacrificed in holding the ground for French offensives that never came off; ~~less~~ as raided cities and torpedoed ships; the Red Cross vans with ~~time~~ loads of mutilated men; the "combing out" of the civilians of the need for more cannon fodder made the medical examinations for fitness less and less fastidious and the tribunals more and more inflexible: above all, the reaction of unreasoning patriotic enthusiasm into equally unreasoning disillusion: all this could easily have been exploited to rub in Pacifist and anti-Imperialist morals, or conversely, to harden the public temper in the opposite direction. Neither of these opportunities appealed to me. What

JOY RIDING AT THE FRONT

I actually said can be ascertained from the following reprint of the text of my three articles.

I may add that I did my own censoring so effectually that only two objections were raised by the authorities. One led me to change a word which had a technical military sense with which I had been unacquainted. The other was a description of some German prisoners which suggested that they had been set to work. A change of another word or two got over that. The rest was unchallenged.

I. BOMBARDMENT

(*From The Daily Chronicle, 5th March 1917*)

Not long before the war I was returning from Germany through the Vosges, not tied to time in any way, and pleasing myself as to my route. I took Domremy on my way for the sake of St Joan of Arc, and Rheims for the sake of its datelessly unique French sculpture, especially a Virgin whom I intended some day to put into a play. I spent an evening in a French garrison town, and reflected, not for the first time (for my tour had taken me through Toul and its warlike frontier region at its outset), on the impression of hardbeaten efficiency, sudden readiness and dangerousness, and an extraordinary recklessness of everything else, including appearances, made by the French army rehearsing. They never brushed their clothes: they never cleaned their horses or their wagons or their guns. They said that a Frenchman is never clean and always ready, implying unmistakeably that an Englishman is always clean and never ready. I compared them with the endless column of German soldiers I had seen not long before one morning in Trier (Treves) flowing down the street to a sentimental German tune in a march that was almost a dance, so prettily they swung their bodies to it.

The convention is that the Frenchman is a born dancer, and the German a stiffened, over-drilled ramrod-swallow; but here was the German, willowy and musical, and the Frenchman brusque, contemptuous of the graces, doing everything with a jerk and a snap, as if there were nothing in the world to be con-

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

sidered except getting it done. I judged, as it now seems rightly, that the Frenchman would be a very formidable fighter. And I thought it a pity that the German should be soldiering, which was evidently not his job, though I thought that he, too, would be devoted and difficult to conquer. As for ourselves, I could not think about us at all. We are so outrageously thoughtless that we defy thought. We should have been working as hard at our military business as the French and Germans were; but we would not listen to a word about war, and were quite content to take frightful chances. We have had our usual luck with them; but we have not deserved it from the military point of view, and, indeed, have not got off without paying dearly for our laziness.

At Rheims it occurred to me that I had never seen Ypres, and that I had a Belgian triptych in my pocket. So instead of making straight for Boulogne I turned north, through Ham, Bapaume, Arras, Lille, and Ypres, little knowing that it was my last chance of seeing them as they were. I found Arras a Spanish town, dating from the days of Alva, with a Little Square that made me wonder how big the Great Square could be if this was indeed the little one. Its façades, made up of rows of ornamental gable-ends, were unlike anything else in France that I had seen; and though its cathedral was pseudo-classical in the late Renascence manner, which is a trifle better than the eighteenth century or Dublin manner, there was a medieval town hall.

Ypres was altogether charming. As I emerged from the Vlaminge road and saw the Cloth Hall, it was noon of a fine and pleasant day, and the carillon was ringing out a shower of tunes that would have delighted Couperin, Flemish in their gaiety and French in their brilliancy of tone and elegance of execution. I stopped the car and listened, quite enchanted, until it was over. Then I went to the Hotel de la Châtelainie, in the Great Square at the east end of the Cloth Hall, and had my déjeuner, followed by the usual argument with the hostess, who supposed that I was a vegetarian for the sake of economy, and had reduced her table d'hôte price accordingly. When I had convinced her that I was a millionaire giving extra trouble and prepared to pay on

JOY RIDING AT THE FRONT

that basis, we parted in high good humor; and, after seeing the cathedral, I made my way round by Furnes, Dunkirk, and Calais to Boulogne, wiling the last evening stretch of the journey by inventing a play on the Rodin theme of The Burgesses of Calais, which, like the play about the Rheims Virgin, I have never written down, and perhaps never will. It was a very agreeable day, and left me with a very pleasant memory of Ypres.

I have seen Ypres again. This time, though still a superannuated civilian, I was in khaki, like everybody else, by way of camouflage. I came, not through Lille and Vlamertinge, but from "somewhere in France" by a more easterly road. I was not an idle tourist: I was a Government Guest; and the Government was the British, not the Belgian Government. On my way I discarded my cap, and, like Don Quixote, donned the helmet of Mambrino. And I stuck into my ears a pair of seeming black collar-studs, which did not prevent my hearing anything, but did prevent my overdoing it. Everything was different. The weather was again bright, but intensely cold. The language of the country was English in all its dialects. The farmhouses and villas had no roofs, no floors, large holes in the walls, and no inhabitants. The trees were chipped and scarred, and here and there broken off short.

A man lying by the roadside was not a tramp taking a siesta, but a gentleman who had lost his head. There was no Belgian carillon, but plenty of German music: an imposing orchestration in which all the instruments were instruments of percussion. I cannot honestly say I disliked it: the big drum always excites me. I was not yet in the town; but I was unmistakeably in the Ypres salient; and the Boche was "sending them over" as persistently as the gentleman next door to Mrs Nickleby sent cucumbers and marrows over the garden wall. I was reminded of him by the fact that in the whole countryside there was an extraordinary prevalence of gas and gaiters. Boom! whizzzzzz!!! Boom! whizzzzzz!!! Boom! whizzzzzz!!!—all *fortissimo diminuendo*; then, *crescendo molto subito*, Whizzzzz-bang clatter! In such a bang and clatter had the gentleman by the roadside lost his head. Well, in time of peace he might have lost it much more painfully and mischiev-

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

ously. There are worse ways of ending one's walk in life.

Stimulated by the orchestration the car develops an extra 10 h.-p.; and presently I am again in Ypres. Its houses are standing like the villas and farmhouses, and, like them, have no roofs, no floors, nothing but walls to hide behind, the Germans having with exemplary perseverance converted a city of comfortable homes for friendly people into effective cover for any troops that may see fit at any time to use the town for anti-German military proceedings. Thus is the Boche on the warpath mocked by the Demon of the Unintended, who has a glorious time of it when the drums begin to beat. Everything is arranged at the front with military precision and order; but nothing ever happens as it was arranged. Out of a hundred orders, ninetynine end in "Wash out": the poetic formula which cancels. Even the visitor is soon shaken out of his civilian routine of order and punctuality. In the morning the captain proposes: in the afternoon the general disposes: mostly by a very agreeable invitation which is joyfully treated as an order.

Ypres, then, delended and done in as to its hearths, its floors, its roofs, and its domestic amenities, still rears its walls undaunted to the sky, and still provokes the German artillery to "send over" and give an interest to a tour of its streets that was lacking in the happy season of the noonday carillon. An aeroplane flew across above me: a British aeroplane (as it happened, I did not see a single Boche in the air during my eight-day visit); and presently the sky about him flowered into puff-balls. He sailed on triumphantly; and I had an extraordinary lapse of patriotism, and indeed of decency; for when the puff-balls and the bang-bang of the aircraft guns stopped, apparently discouraged, I, forgetting that the warrior in the sky might easily be one of my own personal friends, demanded why the guns did not keep it up. It seemed to me intolerably perfunctory of them to give in so soon. It was explained to me that the guns would have to be relaid to bring them on a target that was travelling at a hundred miles an hour. As a person of my intelligence ought to have known this without having to be told, I was somewhat abashed, and also a little horrified

JOY RIDING AT THE FRONT

on reflection by the discovery of myself in the character I have so often reprobated: that of a sportsman.

My guide took no interest in the artillery beyond enabling me to circumvent certain soldiers whose duty it was to keep people out of the more dangerous parts of the town, and insisting on full speed across the square and past the shattered tower and the twenty or thirty yards sample of façade that was once the Cloth Hall. He was a gigantic officer, an Irishman of the south, full of the historic interest of Ypres, apparently knowing every stone of it, and not giving a dump for the bombardment except as an additional chapter for his book on it. He took me up to a pinnacle and shewed me Ypres beneath me as if it were all the kingdoms of the earth. "Go flat on your face if anything comes over" he remarked. In my youth I had learnt, by sedulously imitating the pantaloons in the harlequinades, to drop flat on my face instantly and then produce the illusion of being picked up neatly by the slack of my trousers and set on my feet again. I had a wild hope that Brer Boche would send over something that would give me an excuse for exhibiting this accomplishment to my new friend. But nothing came over just then; and I left Ypres with my dignity unimpaired.

When our car had left the town far behind, and I took the collar-studs out of my ears and exchanged the helmet of Mambrino for a cloth cap, I found the world suddenly duller. From this I infer that Ypres and its orchestra had been rather exciting, though I had not noticed it at the time.

Of Arras, I will say little, except that in my opinion it has not been bombarded worth a cent [the British bombardment of Dublin beat it hollow; but I resisted the temptation to say this just then]. The cathedral, a copy of a copy, looked better as a ruin than when it was intact. The Town Hall, like the Cloth Hall of Ypres, is now only a subject of gentle regret; and the houses round it are a sample of what might have happened to the whole town if the Boches had thought it worth some more ammunition. The Little Square is very handsomely knocked about; much more so than the Great Square; but the design of both is still clear, and

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

most of their gable-ends are intact. They can be restored without difficulty. Those who have seen the Somme front hardly notice the damage. A gas alert was conspicuously announced; but nothing in that line happened, except that I talked a great deal to Mr Special Correspondent Tomlinson, who came round with me.

From St Eloi, Philip Gibbs and I surveyed the battlefields of the Vimy ridge. It was a landscape like any other landscape. The silence of the cold winter evening after sunset was threatened rather than broken by the booming of the guns that never cease now in this devoted countryside. A solitary shell burst in Neuville St Vaast. Gibbs, a man of a fine Irvingesque melancholy, seemed to meditate on the Ruins of Empires, but was probably reflecting on the chances of our being frozen during the journey back to our quarters. We were. The Poles have no terrors for me now. But my spirits always rise as the thermometer falls below freezing. Snow is beautiful to me; I hate mud, of which I did not encounter a single gob; and I am none the worse for my freezings.

The Somme front in the snow and brilliant sunshine was magnificent. The irony of the signposts was immense. "To Maurepas"; and there was no Maurepas. "To Contalmaison"; and there was no Contalmaison. "To Pozières"; and there was no Pozières. I went to the windmill of Pozières, and saw a little mound on which the windmill may have stood. Trones Wood was a cocoanut shy with no cocoanuts on the sticks: our guns had scooped what the enemy guns had left. On the road to Ypres the trees had stood, an unbroken Old Guard lining the road, with hardly a gap in their ranks. But here! With every limb shot to bits, beheaded, halved, cut off at the shins or torn out of the earth and flung prostrate, these woods seemed to scud with bare poles or broken jury-masts before the wind as our car passed, all their rigging blown and shot away. Of houses, except in one strangely-spared place, not a trace. And I knew from what I had seen in Ypres that this meant that almost every square yard of brick had received a separate smashing hit. As to the ground, you cannot find enough flat earth in a square mile to play marbles on. The moon seen through a telescope, or a slice of Gruyère cheese, is a

JOY RIDING AT THE FRONT

tennis lawn by comparison. From the small pit made by the funny little Stokes gun that spits out shells as fast as you drop them in, to the dew-pond made by the medium trench mortar, culminating in the incredible crater made by the subterranean mine, the land is humped and hollowed continuously everywhere. Such ploughing and harrowing was never seen before on earth. Compared to this, Arras is a knockabout joke, and Ypres a rough-and-ready conversion of buildings to military purposes. Napoleon, or any other condottiero of the piffling past, might have done as much to them. But here the British hurricane has swept away and delved up what the German typhoon had left. The land, caught "between the pass and fell incenséd points of mighty opposites," has flung everything their hands burdened it with into their teeth in fragments; taken patiently the print of their elephantine footsteps; and swallowed and made dust of their bravest by the right of their common mother, the Earth.

I spent a week in the survey of all this ruin, with the booming and whizzing of its unresting progress continually in my ears. And I am bound to state plainly, as a simple fact to be exploited by devils or angels, according to its true nature, that I enjoyed myself enormously and continuously, in spite of exposures and temperatures that finally gave me my first taste of frostbite.

I shall recur presently to this diabolical phenomenon, but not immediately; for I have first to say something about the technique of war.

II. THE TECHNIQUE OF WAR

(From The Daily Chronicle of the 7th March 1917)

All strategists of the armchair will agree with me if I say that questions as to the origin and spiritual justification of the war are matters of opinion to which no two men can be expected to give the same reply, and that questions of military technique are questions of ascertained fact to which there can be only one answer. But I shall say nothing of the sort, because, as an old politician and amateur of science, I know better. At the front, if you ask excessively complex, obscure, and finally unanswerable questions as

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

to the psychology and ethics of the war, from its far back germination to its still highly speculative upshot, you will find fifty men giving you the same answer, especially if they all read the same newspaper. But if you ask the technical experts a question on a point of simple fact concerning their weapons or any other part of their technical material, you get answers of startling discrepancy. When the answer to your question is a figure, one authority says 100 and another 20,000. Every playwright is familiar with this phenomenon. When he has to consult experts on technical points, military, legal, clerical, or medical, every expert gives him a different answer, and, if he pleads a previous answer, declares that the other expert is an ignoramus. Finally the playwright is driven to conclude that science is a matter of the taste and fancy of the scientist, whilst the conduct of a husband when he discovers his innocent wife concealed in the bedroom of another gentleman is as immutable as the orbits of the spheres are supposed to be (probably erroneously).

Therefore my remarks on the technique of the war are founded, not on the authority of the experts whom I consulted at the front, but on my own civilian observation and common sense, and must be taken for what these are worth.

First, then, if the big guns had the precision to which they pretend, or even anything approaching it, the war would be over in two days. The armies could cut off each other's communications, and consequently each other's supplies of food, at a trifling cost. On the Somme front the Germans, having recently occupied the British positions, know as much about them as we do. Our aeroplanes have provided us with photographs of the German positions; and the stereoscopic projection and interpretation of these photographs have reached a pitch at which they are now practically completely intelligible. The British taxpayer reads of how the big guns can hit an invisible mark at the other side of a range of mountains, and of how the airman, with his wireless telegraph, can from his perch in the empyrean send to the gunner the correction for his gun and ensure the destruction of everything within the range of his bird's-eye vision. And the British taxpayer,

JOY RIDING AT THE FRONT

knowing that shells cost anything up to £1000 apiece, and that even a small shell will dispose of 12 men and wreck a railway line, or dig up a roadway so as to make it impassable for at least two hours, is led to calculate that five million shells would wipe out the entire German nation, and that 12 shells per day per road would cut off the food and ammunition of the enemy, and bring him to his knees in 48 hours. When nothing of the kind happens, and he is asked, ten times over every week, to find money enough to cover his most extravagant estimate of the cost of bringing the war to a sudden and decisive end, he is tempted to complain that something must be wrong; that the armies are not really trying; that the kings and the profiteers are intriguing to make war perpetual; that the Generals are dug-outs who should be superseded; and that a more resolute prosecution of the war should be made apparent by the infliction of some new and extraordinary inconvenience on himself and his neighbors (especially his neighbors) and a sensational annihilation of the Hun.

Now I, as an amateur and a civilian, must not venture to say that the instruments of war are not instruments of precision; but I may and do say without risk of contradiction that the things which would happen if they were instruments of precision do not happen, in spite of the fact that the desire of the soldier that they should happen is beyond all question. If they did, I should not be alive to tell the tale. To work out on paper the correction for aiming a big gun takes a chartered accountant five minutes, and would take me half an hour. But when the correction is made and the gun fired, a dozen conditions of atmospheric pressure and refraction evade all correction, and shake even the eternal principle that every bullet has its billet. You have to fire 5000 shells on the off chance of one reaching the mark; and the consequence is that unless you are very flush of ammunition you do not fire at all. I stood with astonishment behind and before British batteries shelling the Germans with reckless prodigality. We were within easy range of the German guns; and I waited for the reply. There was no reply: Brer Boche evidently considered that a shell saved is a shell gained. As the besieged Roman destroyed the hope of

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

the beleaguerer by throwing loaves to him, we parade our resources by showering shells on the Germans as if they were eggs at 16 a shilling. When I last met Richard Strauss we were standing in the courtyard of a London house, listening to a band of strange instruments from Barcelona which set our midriffs vibrating with their terrific *fortissimo*; and our cry was "Louder, louder." But the thundering batteries on the Somme were still better than the Barcelona orchestra; and I found myself wishing that Strauss were with me to enjoy it; for at the front you do not hate your enemy, though it may be your lot to fight him and kill him. Hating is one of the things you can do better at home. And you generally stay at home to do it.

Thus, you see, Brer Boche no longer fires at you merely because you fire at him: he fires when he wants to hit something; and my point is that in spite of all the devastation I described in my last article he does not hit it except once in a way, almost by chance. After all, it is the man with the bayonet who goes straight to his mark; and the artillery is most useful when it is clearing the barbed wire from his path; for the days of the cutting pliers are past; and he who sends his men over the top before the wire is brushed away by the guns is a dug-out who is likely to be permanently dug-in if he is rash enough to share the exploit he orders.

Hence you have the miracle of roads crowded with trains of lorries and troops coming and going from the trenches, and of railway trains puffing away as openly as at Croydon, of batteries with their camouflage worn out and howitzers without any camouflage at all, naked to the heavens, all so well known to the enemy that if I were to give not only the names of the places, but their very latitude and longitude, I should make him no wiser than he already is. And yet I was safer there than in London after dark. I had to dress for the part of man-at-the-front in khaki, lest the visibility of my ordinary clothes should devote me to certain death at the hands of the Hun. Well, I might just as well have borrowed a herald's tabard from Sir Alfred Scott Gatty for battlefield wear as far as my visibility was concerned. On all hands I

JOY RIDING AT THE FRONT

could see bodies of men moving about, shewing up against the glittering virgin snow like the bull's eye on a target. Yet neither they nor I were a penny the worse.

I must add that I was left with so poor an opinion of high explosives that I believe we should go back to the black gunpowder of Waterloo if only it were possible to carry the great bulk of it that would be needed. I have already described how the houses of Ypres are still standing, though practically every hearth has had a high explosive shell detonated in it. They make prodigious holes in the ground, these shells; and they hurl the clods to the sky with volcanic energy; but the sky is just where they are not wanted. A less ardently aspiring, more *terre à terre*, expansive explosive would be much more useful. It would bring a house down by blowing its ankles from under it instead of first knocking its roof in and then very superfluously blowing it off again. Lateral, not vertical energy, is what, as it seems to the amateur, is needed. Inventors please note.

The combination of imprecision with the narrowest localization of effect leads to an impunity under exposure which is incredible to the man at home. I saw a steel foundry, one of the largest in the country, with its furnaces visible at night for a dozen miles round, in full blast under the very noses of the German air service; yet none of the many bombs aimed at it have done any damage worth mentioning. Its risk from its own accidents is greater than from the engines of destruction brought against it by its powerful enemies. The British air squadron which entertained me for a night has discarded observers, photographic cameras, and bombs, and consists of pure duellists. Their machines carry one man only; and he, with one hand on his tiller and the other on his machine gun, throws himself on any German he can find in the air, and intimates, like the Shakespearean warrior, that "for one or both of us the hour has come." At that station the commanding officer, in pointing out to me an alarum horn which meant "Huns!" accidentally touched the button and sounded it. Before he could explain that it was a false alarm a knight errant sprang into the air and spent the next hour searching for an

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

imaginary foeman. For the credit of one of my own profession let me add that this commanding officer was a famous actor. That he handled a flying squadron without effort was easy for me to understand. To a man who has produced a modern comedy, a campaign is child's play.

I do not, of course, mean to imply that duelling in the air is superseding observation, photography, bombing, fire-direction, and the like. At another station I had seen the two-seater aeroplane with all its apparatus, including the sighting contrivances by which the dropping of a bomb can be aimed like a rifle on the Bisley ranges. But the duellists brought me back to the fact that the man is still the instrument of precision par excellence. You do not have to send a thousand airmen to do the work of one. You do have to send a thousand bombs to do the work of one. And, after all, they are much less likely to do it.

I insist on these points—always inviting you to bear in mind that I have no authority for them except my own conclusion from my own amateur observation—for two reasons. First, for the sake of those who, having husbands and sons and friends and brothers at the front, or being themselves in training for that fiery ordeal, are tormented by the idea that nothing can long escape these terrible engines of destruction which have eyes in the air, and whose trajectory can be determined so exactly by their elaborate sighting contrivances and carefully calculated corrections that they can slay a man infallibly 15 miles off. They can, O anxious ones; but somehow they don't. The Commander-in Chief, with whom I spent a very pleasant afternoon, was good enough to take me to witness a series of experiments with certain terrifying methods of destruction which the hardiest hero might shrink from facing. Yet seasoned warriors who had tried and faced these things laughed, and made offers with respect to them which reminded me of the bets which my colleagues on the old St Pancras Vestry used to make when we discovered a new method of detecting the germs of deadly disease in milk. They would, for a bet of half a crown, drink a glass of the condemned fluid; and they never paid the penalty which science declared inevitable.

JOY RIDING AT THE FRONT

The danger of these infernal machines is real and appalling enough; but it cannot seek its foe as a man does. At Ypres, when the gas scattered one regiment, and its victims lined the road, coughing their lungs out in torment, another regiment, undaunted by the spectacle, went right through them up towards the gas and carried on. No doubt these miracles can be explained; but they certainly occur; and the moral is, do not be in a hurry to bid the devil good morning. Life is very uncertain at the front; but so is death. The inevitable does not always come off.

My second reason for insisting is the aforesaid British taxpayer. He must be taught that war is not precise and economical. It is almost inconceivably wasteful and extravagant. It burns the house to roast the pig, and even then seldom roasts him effectively. It is a gamble in which the German citizen and the British citizen must play the impossible martingale of double or quits. The German is economizing his ammunition only that he may waste it madly when the battle is joined again. We are damning the expense and hammering away because it is a poor heart that never rejoices; also no doubt because we have calculated that extravagance pays. But calculation or no calculation, waste is the law of modern war; and nothing is cheap on the battlefield except the lives of men. Give your soldiers trench mortars enough; and no enemy can live in his trench or escape being buried alive in his dug-out. But the Kaiser can say as much with equal truth. Therefore, my taxpayer, resign yourself to this: that we may fight bravely, fight hard, fight long, fight cunningly, fight recklessly, fight in a hundred and fifty ways, but we cannot fight cheaply. That means that we must organize to increase our production. Mere saving wins no battles. If we are to destroy with one hand we must create with the other.

One more moral. All the random gases and poisons and flame projectors are negligible as factors in victory compared to an increase in the number and precision of the weapons which kill wholesale. And you can increase precision not only by improving the weapon, but by keeping your head better when using it. That is the mischief of hatred: it is bad for the head. The man who

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

says, "I will turn the handle of the machine gun; but I will not hate my enemy" is really more likely to hit him than the man who is seeing red. He who longs to bury the hatchet is more likely to bury it in the skull of his respected foe than to chop his own shins with it.

III. CONSOLATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

(*From The Daily Chronicle of the 8th of March 1917*)

If, as is likely enough, you are in a hopeless moral muddle about the war, you may be curious as to how they reconcile it with their conscience at the front to heap death on destruction in the amazing manner I have tried to describe, and whether I write as a human being or a fiend when I shamelessly avow that I enjoyed my week at the front much more than I enjoyed my last week at the seaside.

To take the latter and lesser point first, war does not blot out the glory of the sun nor the spacious beauty of the broad fields of France in their candid robe of snow; and a hungry and social man does not enjoy a meal and good company at quarters or headquarters any the less because the table is a mess-table, even when the windows are shaken by occasional shells going or coming. Talking about the war among soldiers is not depressing and sometimes revolting, like talking about it among civilians. To the civilian the war is often not a war at all: it is a squabble, to be conducted by writing anonymous postcards and throwing a dead cat back and forward over the garden wall. To him, when a British soldier kills a German soldier, it is a heroic deed: when a German soldier kills a British one, it is a dastardly assassination. No soldier on service goes on like that. All the thoughtful soldiers (and war makes some soldiers very thoughtful) clearly understand that there is a morality of war quite distinct from the morality of peace, just as the morality of an interview with a tiger in the jungle is distinct from the morality of an interview with a missionary; but they do not ridiculously condemn the actions of their enemy in terms of the peace morality whilst they justify their own in terms of the war morality.

JOY RIDING AT THE FRONT

Pacifism does not trouble the Higher Command in the least. The Quakers cannot teach a Brigadier, much less a Commander-in-Chief, anything about the horrors of war. He can shake hands whole-heartedly with President Wilson both on that point and even on the abstract desirability of avoiding a victory. A victory for anybody is a victory for war; and whether your General is professionalized enough to desire a victory for war or humane enough to deprecate it, the practical moral for him is the same: he strains every nerve to avoid a victory—for the other fellow. And the other fellow does the same. Thus all the tangle and tedium of the controversy between the pacifist and the militarist disappear on the battlefield; for whether you fight for victory or fight to make victory impossible, the result is the same: you fight like the very devil anyhow. The piety of the Kaiser, whose favorite reading, if I am rightly informed, is a collection of Bishop Boyd Carpenter's sermons, produces exactly the same result in the field as that worship of Wotan and Thor with which he is absurdly credited, or as the enthusiastic atheism of Frederick the Great. I did not ask Sir Douglas Haig or Sir Henry Rawlinson whether they sympathized with Quaker Stephen Hobhouse or with fire-eating Admiral Fisher: not because it would have been indiscreet—for they put me extremely at my ease by their frankness and hospitality—but because it did not matter.

For good or evil, when once the cause is staked on the sword, Cromwell, Washington, and Lincoln must go through with it as resolutely as Ivan the Terrible, Alexander, or Napoleon. The more they desire the end of the war, the harder they must fight to reach it. When clever literary amateurs like von Bernhardi or the late General Butler pontificate about war being a biological necessity, it is well that Dr Chalmers Mitchell, as a professional biologist, should demonstrate that if they understood biology they would know better; but when the enemy's barrage rains on you or his bayonet makes for your stomach, the biology does not matter and the necessity does: all you need consider then is that the best parry is a thrust, and the best way out of a barrage the way towards the gun. One does not trouble about the danger of

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

damp sheets when the house is on fire; and, granted as much as you like that both we and the Germans ought to have managed better than to go to war, now that we have done it we must put our backs into it, not sparing our souls at home any more than the soldiers spare their bodies abroad.

They tell me that the German prisoners often shew an eager interest in the safety of their new comrades. This is not really more strange than that French and British soldiers should be fighting on the same side, or that Irish soldiers whose patriotism consists in an implacable political hostility to England should carry her flag, or the French flag, or any flag, to victory sooner than fail in the supreme duty of putting up a good fight. This may seem to you a queer morality, a boyish morality, a silly and destructive morality; but it is a real one; and unless you can understand it you will never be any use to your country or any other country during a war. Please note that it is, within camp limits, a cosmopolitan, supernational, essentially neighborly morality, and therefore one which it specially behoves a Pacifist to understand.

A celebrated civilian playwright put into the mouth of a ruinously pious king the sentiment that "Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just." Setting aside the obvious comment that there are no just quarrels in the world, because when people quarrel they cease to be just, and if they had been just before they would not have quarrelled, one must say bluntly that war is not concerned with the justice of its quarrel. That is one of the main objections to war as an institution, and the one that will eventually uproot it from human morality. But it is too late to consider it when the sword is drawn. You cannot vindicate outraged morality by surrendering or allowing yourself to be beaten. On the contrary, if you are in the wrong, and desire to acknowledge it and make amends, you must achieve victory before your amends can have any value. Let us suppose for the sake of argument that the Kaiser becomes convinced that his declaration of war was a crime; that it is his duty to restore Lorraine to France and Schleswig to Denmark; that he owes Belgium an apology

JOY RIDING AT THE FRONT

and a colossal indemnity; and that he should make us a present of his fleet and confine German activity to the land. If he were to do this now (assuming, of course, that his subjects would not at once consign him to an Irrenanstalt) there would be no grace nor moral significance in the operation: it would be interpreted simply as the ransom offered by a defeated combatant. Only with his foot on our necks could he make an admiring and edified world dub him Wilhelm the Magnanimous. I press this on the consideration of the British citizen who has qualms of conscience about our part in the war. He has plenty of partisans in the trenches. I can assure him with some confidence that there is not a professional soldier at the front, on either side, who is imposed on by the special pleading which was put up in this country in 1914 to avoid the disruption of a political party, and in Germany to save the credit of a dynasty. The soldiers all damn the party politicians and the courtiers with the greatest heartiness, and feel far more strongly against those who smoothly said peace when there was no peace, and left us only half prepared to meet our engagements, than against the thoroughbred Tolstoyans.

In the trenches there are plenty of Socialists, internationalists, haters of war, men who read *The Labour Leader* and eschew *The Morning Post*. But can any sane man's mind be so confused as to suppose that they raise white flags, or fold their arms and allow themselves to be killed, or desire victory for the Hohenzollerns? On the contrary, they are among the best of the fighting material. They, too, wish to dictate the terms of peace; and they know that they cannot do that if they are conquered. There is at home a childish sort of conceit that imagines it to be possible for a member of a nation to say "I dont hold with war" or "I dont hold with Lloyd George" or with Bonar Law, or Russia, or French Republicanism, or Barabbas, or what not, and to refuse to help in the war accordingly. But that does not survive a day at the front. When war overtakes you, you must fight, and fight to win, whether you are the aggressor or the aggrieved, whether you loathe war as the kingdom of hell on earth or regard it as the nursery of all the virtues. It is not that you must defend yourself

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

or perish: many a man would be too proud to fight on those terms. You must defend your neighbor or betray him: that is what gets you. You may swear never again to vote for any person or party who had a hand in bringing about the war, or you may look forward with exultation to a century of triumphant khaki elections; but if you have an atom of common sense and sympathy with the man in the field, you will help your soldiers to victory for all you are worth, even if you are longing for the peace that will restore them to their homes and make the war seem an incredible nightmare.

This is why there are no politics or pacifist agitations at the front, though there are more earnest politicians and pacifists there than anywhere else on earth.

The devastations of war are not all to be deplored. I shall not attempt to console those mourners for the Louvain library who have always voted against a penny rate for a library in their own parish; and I will not pretend that Ypres and Arras are as pleasant to see as they were when I saw them in peace. But I have been a member of a sanitary authority concerned with the clearance of slum areas and the administration of Building Acts; and the tragedy of the Somme district began for me in some of the villages which have not been demolished, not in those which have. A comparison of what the Germans have done to Albert with what I should like to do to London or Manchester would make the Kaiser seem a veritable Angel of the Passover beside me. As to your medieval Cloth Halls and the like, what right had we to sponge on the Middle Ages for the beauty we would not produce ourselves? I say would not advisedly: those who say we could not may be referred to the art school of Birmingham (of all places!) where Mr Catterson Smith has taken the common English boy, with no more than a common taste for drawing, and elicited from him drawings that have all the medieval qualities.

As soon as we really want an Ypres of medieval charm we can have it. If we do not want it, nobody but a handful of members of The Art Workers' Guild will suffer the smallest privation by the

JOY RIDING AT THE FRONT

smashing of the Cloth Hall and the Cathedral. I have loved these things and taken trouble to see them as much as any man; but I know that as good fish are in the sea as ever came out of it, and better. When the affected taste for such fish becomes a genuine imperative appetite, as it was from the twelfth century to the fifteenth, those fish will be caught. So blaze away, brave gunners on both sides: if you slay enough Philistines and reduce Commercialism to ruins you may prove the soundest builders of all. Either "the best is yet to be" or the sooner we all blow one another off the face of the earth the better.

They tell us, too, that the Somme front is blasted and ruined for ever. Childe Harold, in the Peninsula, said of our army and their foes that they had served but

"To feed the crow on Talavera's plain,
And fertilize the field that each pretends to gain."

And now, it is said, matters are worse. We sterilize the field that each pretends to gain. But is this so? The artillery major who obligingly blew half a field to bits for me to shew me how it is done, assured me that he was doubling the value of the farmer's land by a super-ploughing which no farmer could afford. "But" said I "how are these pits to be filled up and smoothed over for the tillage?" "I could shove them together with a few charges of dynamite" he said; and I lent a ready ear; for I have always held that "to plough and hoe, to reap and sow, and be a farmer's boy" is an unendurable drudgery, and that artillery will find its true service in agriculture, as it has already done in locomotion (your motor-car cylinder is a cannon).

But how of the effect of all this on the men? Here there is nothing reasonable to be said: we are face to face with the fact that pugnacity is still a part of human nature, and that civilization is in its infancy. Men will play at war when there are no battles to fight: their cinema films and magazine stories prove that war is a favorite food of their imagination. They volunteer for war without waiting to be compelled; and they go back to it after suffering its worst hardships.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

When Garibaldi offered his soldiers starvation, wounds, and death, they jumped at the chance: when Mazzini offered them the millennium they took no interest in him. At the front you see men coming from the trenches so tired that their mouths hang open; and you have only to read the pages of Mr Patrick Macgill to learn that nothing but the fascination of war could make their lot bearable. Others, returning to the trenches after their respite, are more serious and concerned. All of them would describe themselves as completely "fed up" with war. They are not joking, nor singing songs, nor making the least pretence of enjoying themselves. But unless they are overstrained by insufficient relief and leave, or badly shocked or shaken, they are no more hopelessly wretched than I. An officer with whom I condoled on the unutterable boredom of war admitted it to the fullest, but mentioned, as a set-off, that "there is always something exciting." And this something is nothing but war itself. Men torn from civil life of the most prosperous and comfortable kind, and engaged in the most perilous service under conditions that would, one would suppose, make them envy a Polar explorer, say without affectation that they have never been so happy. They seek terrors and hardships more determinedly than warm clothes, comfortable firesides, and security. The "never again" of the civilian papers, the apology for the war on the ground that it is to end war, finds no echo at the front. The soldier may pity those who have been driven from their wrecked homes to wander on the face of the earth in helpless vagabondage, and are the victims of war without having any part in it. He does not pity himself.

Great correspondents like Philip Gibbs, finely sensitive to the miseries of the troops, and with literary power enough to convey a heart-breaking sense of it, nevertheless seek war out and see it through, fascinated by the spirit which drives men to endure and defy so much outrageous mischief and danger. The soldier says that war is hell; but he does not say that it is a crime. We make many accusations against Germany, some of them ridiculous enough in view of similar exploits of our own; but when a man becomes a soldier he ceases to blame her for bringing war upon

JOY RIDING AT THE FRONT

Europe, though that is the real grievance of pacifist morality against her. Therefore the moralizing which represents the waste and destruction, the tortures and terrors and sufferings of the war, as quite unmixed horrors, may be edifying and human; but it is not true to nature at the front. The strange satisfactions and fascinations which men find in war may be rooted in that part of their nature which is common to the paleface, the redskin brave, and the Zulu warrior. They may be largely a reaction against the dullness of a civil life that satisfies none of their heroic instincts. I do not justify them; and I know that they must finally be satisfied in nobler ways or sternly repressed and discarded; but I should be foolish and dishonest if I attempted to ignore them.

Then there are the reasonable and intelligible benefits of "service" as distinguished from the selfish commercial money hunting of the merely unsocial private adventurer. In the Army you do not have to think of money nor to cut out your neighbor, nor to cheat and adulterate and entrap customers by lying advertisements. Instead of your hand being against every man's and every man's hand against you, you are continually trying to get things done in the best possible way for the benefit of your comrades in arms, of your country, of the whole of which you are a part. You may not escape from the bribing contractor and the corrupt quartermaster or the thief who steals your kit; but at least they are recognized as criminals, as the disgraces and accidents of a system normally honorable, whereas commerce is normally competitive and places your individual pocket before all the higher objects of ambition. It is quite reasonable to hope that many a man who has gone into the Army a commercialized cad will come out of it a public-spirited gentleman. There will be ennobled men to set against maimed ones, and saved souls to set against dead bodies. This is an argument, not for the perpetuation of war but for the purification of peace; but as long as peace remains unpurified, and war remains in some respects nobler, let us give it its due, and not deliver ourselves to the oppression of an unrelieved horror.

There are drawbacks; for if commerce at its worst makes a man

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

a rogue, discipline at its worst makes him an automaton; and a rogue is better than an automaton, and often much less cruel. But the military automaton of the barrack is a peace product of whom the vicissitudes and surprises of war make short work. The main objection to the huge modern military systems is not that they produce wars, but that they are reduced to absurdity for such long periods by peace. For the soldier in the field there is something to be said: for the soldier in barracks, nothing. We had better reform the barracks and get rid of war; for, when all is said, war is a frightful calamity, and can be defended only on the ground that our inertia is so gross that nothing but gigantic calamities will induce us to move on. All the military virtues could be exercised in a decently organized civil life; and all the reforms could be effected by reason and conscience as well as by terror. But we did not so exercise them; and the Germans did not so exercise them; and now we must take the consequences. To become Tolstoyans in the middle of a war which we brought on ourselves by being fire-eaters in time of peace (in so far as we were anything but lazy pleasure-seekers) would be to shew ourselves as unwarlike as we were uncivilized, a people unfit to survive on either plane. At all events, at the front—and in these columns I am concerned with the front—they will not make peace unless their enemy forces them to, though they have reasons to desire it of which no civilian can form any adequate conception.

The power to make peace, and the responsibility for war and its enormous mischiefs, do not rest with the Army, but with the politicians at home who wield this monstrous engine of death and devastation. It is an engine which a wise man would hesitate to trust in the hands of God, much less in the hands of men who have sustained no higher test than that of a Parliamentary election. Since they have undertaken as gods to control it, and had their undertaking accepted, they must do their best, under the full responsibility which can be charged upon them only by full powers; but if even one shot too many be fired the guilt will lie on them and not on the soldier. For at this rate of destruction the prayer of the peoples must be, not "Give us peace in our time"

JOY RIDING AT THE FRONT

but "Give us peace in all time." As to the heroes who do not desire peace, there will be for them the "mental fight" of William Blake, who, long after Waterloo, did not let his sword sleep in his hand. His Jerusalem is still to be built; and it will not be built with howitzers. They are too easy to fire.

The following may serve as postscript. I cut it from the parliamentary report in *The Times*.

MR BERNARD SHAW'S VISIT TO THE FRONT

(*From The Times, 9th May 1917*)

Replying to Major Hunt (Shropshire, Ludlow, U.), Mr Macpherson (Ross and Cromarty, L.) said "It is the accepted policy to ask distinguished publicists and authors to visit our front. These invitations are issued by the Department of Information and General Headquarters. In accordance with this policy Mr George Bernard Shaw recently visited the British Front in France."

Major Hunt asked whether the hon. member was aware that Mr Bernard Shaw was the gentleman who advised British soldiers to shoot their officers, as reported in the San Francisco Bulletin of November 2, 1914, and whether he thought that this was the sort of man who ought to be allowed to go to the front.

Mr Macpherson. "I was not aware of that particular fact; but I have always found that when any gentleman visits the front in France he comes back with an added desire to help the British Army and is proud of it." (Cheers.)

Mr Arnold White had already called the War Office to account for sending me out. He received the following reply.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

War Office. Whitehall S.W. March 24.

Dear Sir,

I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 6th March 1917, and to inform you that the case has been investigated, and that nothing is known against this Officer.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

E. W. ENGLEHEART, S.C.

(For Lieutenant-General, Military Secretary).

*Arnold White Esq. Windmill Cottage, Farnham Common,
Bucks.*

CHAPTER XI

CATACLYSM

THE war dragged on; and I sedulously assured everyone who discussed it with me that it would last thirty years; for the war of attrition, as it was called, attrited both sides impartially, the great offensives always petering out just before their consummation, and the momentary successes producing no more decisive result than the tediously protracted failures. In spite of my knowledge of the fact that Capitalism destroys the habit of self-support in nations so completely that when the necessity arises they do not know how to set about it, I could not believe that a region so vast and fertile as that covered by the central empires could be starved by blockade if, under the terrible pressure of war, its rulers organized its production effectively. As it proved, Capitalism had left Germany without knowledge of or belief in any other methods than capitalistic methods. Capitalistic bookkeeping is useless for vital as distinguished from commercial balance sheets; and in the end Germany and Austria had to surrender as being at the end of their resources when they were hardly at the beginning of them, as their plunderers soon found. In 1917, however, their artificial exhaustion was still a secret, even from most of their own people; and there seemed no reason to believe that if both sides cut their military coat according to their monetary cloth they could not prolong the game of Kilkenny cats for ever.

Suddenly came the cataclysm. It was the crash of an epoch. The mountainous dyke within which western Capitalism had been working for centuries cracked and left a gap the whole width of Europe from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Mere writing cannot describe it: it makes metaphor silly. Nobody here had the least notion of its magnitude and significance; nor has it dawned on us yet: our elder statesmen and journalists are still yapping at it like lapdogs at a stampede of elephants. And it began as an incident of the war.

Reference to the Parliamentary report quoted at the end of the

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

preceding chapter will remind you that in *Common Sense About the War* I had said that if the soldiers had any sense they would go home and attend to their own affairs. There was nothing new enough in this to be very startling: it was only a variation on the theme of Carlyle's well-known apologue of Dumdrudge. The parliamentary questioner, narrowed by his patriotism, did not grasp its full scope: he thought I had confined my advice to British soldiers. At all events he expressed no objection to its application to enemy soldiers. With the general reader it had passed as a pious and wellworn commonplace, of no importance because there was no apparent possibility of its being acted on.

In 1917 the Russian soldiers acted on it.

They went home. They combined politically with the peasants (being mostly peasants themselves) in bodies with a name new to western Europe: Soviets. They found elaborately educated middle class idealists like Lenin and Trotsky, and proletarian men of action like Markin, to command them; and they set up as their deceased prophet a German Jewish Protestant lawyer's university-trained son, Karl Marx, famous as a historian of British Capitalism, and its implacable foe. These leaders and captains, though theorists in economics and novices in administration, were in action realists who understood that the political establishment of their ideas and their faith involved the ruthless extermination or subjection of those who actively opposed them, and the careful education of children in that faith so that all inculcated opposition to them might perish with the existing generation. Their opponents, equally clear on the subject of the extermination, raised a White Army which did what it could in that direction; but young Russia rose up miraculously as a Red Army at Trotsky's summons and smashed them. English and French precedent was followed by killing the Tsar, but departed from by sparing him the mockery and long-drawn-out torment of trial, sentence, and formal public execution before a gaping crowd. Instead, the Bolsheviks indulged him with an elaborate and comforting religious service without telling him why, and then, his soul being at peace, shot him at thirty seconds notice and his whole family

CATACLYSM

with him. They did not kill their Archbishop as we killed Laud; but they convinced him that it was as much as his life was worth to conspire or preach against them. He forbore, and survived. They "expropriated the expropriators" as a matter of Marxian course. They took the land from the landlords and distributed it among the husbandmen, only to find later on that they must take the cultivation of the land in hand themselves as public work if its full modern possibilities were to be realized. They hanged the remonstrant landlords, and shot the drunken workmen and the corrupt overseers. To all those who were perverted by class prejudices or university education they were merciless, refusing them employment, especially as teachers, and treating them as persons in whose continued existence the country had a negative rather than a positive interest. The successful farmer who had acquired three horses or more where his neighbors had only one or none they taught to prefer the general prosperity to his own by taking his three horses from him and systematically excluding him from all share in the direction of the communal farms. When it was found impossible to dispense altogether with private trading the trader was treated as a pariah, and his children denied the communal higher education (the only one available) unless at the age of fourteen they solemnly abandoned and renounced him. They left the churches open for the women to burn candles in as a weakness permissible to their sex, and for the priests to conduct services for those who desired them; but in the schools they taught the children science and told them that the religion of the old Churches was an opiate to reconcile the people to slavery in this world by promises of bliss and revenge in the next, and took care that every child should grow up knowing quite well that many of the statements presented in the Bible and prayerbook as statements of facts are fables like those in ordinary books. In short, from the point of view of the English landed gentry and plutocracy they were a gang of murderers, thieves, and blasphemers whom to destroy as vermin was a most sacred duty whilst from the proletarian point of view they, doing those things that we ought to have done and leaving undone those things that

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

we ought not to have done, were the sole hope and promise of civilization.

All this followed from the refusal of the Russian soldiers to go on with the war in 1917, and would have been impossible without it. To us it seemed nothing but an infamous backing out of our war by an Ally on whom we had depended to steamroller our enemies on their eastern front. When the steamroller went over our own toes our fury was unbounded. We cared nothing for Marxian ideology: all we knew was that the Russians had stopped fighting and intended to make peace with Germany. We could not stand that at any price. The most intransigent Socialist and champion of Karl Marx in England, the late Henry Mayers Hyndman, outdid Mr Winston Churchill in his denunciations of Lenin and Bolshevism. The projected treaty of Brest Litovsk acted on his Marxist internationalism like a wet sponge on a schoolchild's slate, and gave the Russians one of the many lessons they were receiving at that time on how little international Socialism can depend on its old literary supporters when it comes to business and outrages their patriotism and their ingrained and almost unconscious assumption that our old parliamentary contrivances for shackling monarchs and obstructing all attempts of governments to substitute public for private enterprise are sacred bulwarks of liberty. Our Socialist centre, represented by the Labor Party, was estranged from the Bolsheviks not so much by its own recoil as by the enormous gap between anything it could pretend or hope to do and the terrific sweep of the new broom in Moscow.

The Russians, like most of the agents of great changes, have never quite realized how much they owed to circumstances. If our British army had been demobilized and thrown on the world without a penny or a job, the fat would have been in the fire here too. But British Capitalism knew better than to let anything of the kind happen. It was quite unable to employ our victorious and well fed soldiers after the crash which followed a delusive ecstasy of overcapitalization (called prosperity) in 1921; but it did not wait to be held to ransom by them: it bought them off by

CATACLYSM

doles which were so effective that now, twelve years after the armistice, we have many ablebodied young proletarians who have never done a stroke of industrial work in their lives, and yet have more money in their pockets than their hardworking grandfathers ever enjoyed. If the Tsardom could have afforded similar precautions who can say that Lenin and Trotsky could have saved themselves from Siberia? Even as I write Trotsky cannot secure a Russian domicile even in Siberia: he is in exile in Turkey; and though we can all understand the colossal contempt with which he regards a Socialist Government which dares neither to admit him to our shores nor to exclude Tsarists, it is a great pity that he is not welcomed among us, if only that he might find out for himself on the spot how little he could have done in Mr Ramsay MacDonald's place if the Russian soldiers had not taken my advice and gone home.

On the plutocratic side only one statesman saw the danger to his side and caste: the late Lord Lansdowne. He wrote to *The Times* to say "Stop the War: it has gone far enough." *The Times* in one of its occasional fits of lunacy, refused to publish the letter, which appeared at once in *The Morning Post*. It was denounced as a German Peace Offensive; and the wheels of the war chariot went over old Lord Lansdowne; but he lived to see three more empires crash in the ruin he had tried to avert, and the seats of the mighty occupied everywhere by persons who in his youth could hardly have aspired to black his boots.

Meanwhile I, by no means desirous that the doom of the empires should be averted, delivered myself as follows.

THE FALLING MARKET IN WAR AIMS

(From *The Daily Chronicle* of the 12th January 1918)

The bidding for peace took a long time to start; but now that it has started it is bewilderingly brisk. It seems only yesterday that to have any peace aims at all was denounced as the blackest pro-German treason. Victory, smashing triumphant victory without any ulterior object whatever except "the crushing of Prussian

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

militarism" (the same thing in other words) was the whole aspiration of the pugnacious patriot. To give Germany a knock-out blow was admissible; but to take anything from her, or want anything from her, or compromise the purity of our position as the ministers of God's wrath against her, was flat corruption. "Get on with the war" we said, rather superfluously, as the war was getting on with us quite as fast as we could keep up with it, and a little faster occasionally in the Atlantic. "What for?" asked a few impossible people. "Never mind: get on with the war" we said. And really we were justified by the facts, because the rulers of Germany shewed no sign of troubling themselves about our aims, or caring whether we had any or not. They did not think our aims mattered, because they did not intend to let us achieve them. And it suited them very well that we should keep declaring that we were out to crush them. That was precisely what they had been telling the German people to convince them that they must fight us to the bitter end in simple self-preservation; and they were only too glad to have our own word to support them.

At this point it occurred to some intelligent Teuton that the moral position of Germany could be considerably improved if Germany left to us the task of declaring that we were out for blood and iron and conquest, and took the Pacifist position herself. The Russian revolution had, in fact, created a situation in which it was extremely important to all the belligerents that they should appear in the character of grievously molested Quakers, reluctantly forced to defend their countries against imperialist aggression. We did not notice this as soon as the Germans did: we were too busy bawling "Get on with the war." Consequently, though the tug-of-war on the western front went on as fiercely as ever, in the moral tug-of-war that goes on between the Governments in their appeals to the conscience of civilization the Germans suddenly let go the rope; and we sat down with a crash. "Why this shocking slaughter?" they said, "We desire peace. We have always desired peace. Let dogs delight to bark and bite; but let us behave as the trustees of civilization. We propose the *status quo ante*, peace on earth and goodwill towards men. We

CATACLYSM

have taken Belgium: we will make Belgium a present of herself. We have annexed the top of France: we will return it to her as a Christmas gift. Western Europe and Africa shall be as they were: the rest can be arranged. If another shot is fired it shall not be our fault."

We were morally dished. Nobody saw it apparently except Lord Lansdowne; and his desperate attempt to capture the ground we should have been the first to occupy was spoilt by our stupidity. For of all possible stupid ways of receiving it the very stupidest was to raise a shriek that we must not dream of peace now because we were beaten. Yet for several days after Lord Lansdowne's letter appeared, it was rank treason, dastardly Pacifism, unblushing Boloism, treacherous pro-Germanism, to suggest that the British army had ever suffered anything but disastrous, disgraceful defeat, or that the irresistible Hun's magnificent sweep to a faultlessly organized victory had been marred by a single reverse. Jellicoe, ci-devant Nelsonic victor of the Jutland Trafalgar, was suddenly banished to the obscurity of the House of Lords for losing that battle. Well might Haig, in his chateau somewhere in France, ask himself desperately whether any commander could struggle against such patriotism, and pray for a Government of Pacifists, of pro-Germans, of Quakers, even of certified lunatics as less dangerous than uncertified ones. German military stock went up with a bound: there was an unmistakeable heartening of the German public, orchestrated by a crescendo in the German militarist music. "We do not ask you to take the defeat of the Allies on our biased authority" said the Pan-Germans: "they tell you so themselves. Read the London papers." And the German people did read them in "Sidelights on England," and believed them. They naturally wanted to believe them; and they could hardly be expected to know that a London patriot is a hysterical creature who is not only unable to keep his head, but cannot be restrained from kicking it round the streets under the impression that it is the Kaiser's head.

The news from the front was not one-sided enough to restore order. Haig had made one of his lion springs and torn Passchen-

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

daele out of Hindenburg's claws before Hindenburg knew where he was. Hindenburg, growling that two could play at that game, had dashed at La Vacquerie, and covered six miles in less than two hours, driving before him naked men, making Parthian slings of their bath towels. The two generals held on grimly to their prey, glaring at one another and panting, but were obliged to confess that honors were easy. In Italy the Government had played the fool with the Labor question.

Meanwhile our Government had also played the fool, not only over Labor, but over the Russian Revolution. From the moment that revolution broke out there was an inevitable diversion in the energies of our Foreign Office, which at once classed the war with Germany as an affair of secondary importance, and set itself, as a matter of good form, to ignore the Petrograd rabble, and convince the relics of the Benckendorff circle of our unalterable devotion to the Tsardom. It could hardly do less without losing its position in West-end society. Meanwhile the distrust of Labor by our own Government led to the Henderson incident. Mr Henderson, who had been all but disarmed by appeals to his patriotism and loyalty, and by the pretence of admitting him to the Cabinet, had his eyes opened by a gross personal discourtesy; and in that moment Labor found a leader, and Mr Henderson saved his soul alive. "Very good, gentlemen" he said: "you refuse to admit that this war concerns the working class. The working class will now state the aims of England in this war, not from Petrograd or Stockholm, but from London; and you shall take your turn on the mat outside the door whilst Labor is deciding what you shall do." It was a big bounce; but Mr Henderson pulled it off. He delivered the war program of Labor. The Prime Minister had to take it from his hand like a lamb. The French and Italian papers complimented Mr Lloyd George on his sensible submission. President Wilson patted him on the head and said "Good boy," making it clear that he, too, has not an item to add to the Labor program. And we are all trying to pretend that we said so all along.

But the missed point to be illuminated now is that most of this

CATACLYSM

has been accomplished under an illusion. That illusion is that the war aims of the Labor party are not war aims but peace terms. When it was known that Mr Henderson was going simply to shove the Cabinet aside and take the war question into his own hands, the patriots changed their shriek of defeat into an even wilder one of immediate peace, which they always seem to believe can be made by Mr Ramsay MacDonald or Mr Henderson or any other leader of the Labor Party by lifting a finger. Now, if they wanted to defeat Mr Henderson, there was one way of doing it (if it could have been done at all after he had been insulted in his representative capacity); and that way was to insist on what was the simple fact: namely, that his war aims meant from two to thirty years more fighting, as they involved not only an old-fashioned victory of British over German militarism, but a European victory of Democracy over Oligarchy and Autocracy, and of Socialism over competitive Capitalism. But when your patriot's neck gets into a noose, he can always be depended on to draw it tighter by his terrified struggles. All the patriots bawled at the top of their voices that the Labor war aims meant peace by negotiation, a German peace, an inconclusive peace, a dishonorable peace, all sorts of adjectives but ever the same substantive: peace, peace, peace, peace. And thereby they got Mr Henderson out of his great difficulty, which was, how to pass a statement of war aims through a Labor Conference which was longing for peace. The effect of their misjudged but effective help was one of the funniest political farces of the time. When Mr Stephen Walsh, a very formidable opponent, with a heavy card vote in his pocket, moved that the question be adjourned for a month, he was smashed by the single phrase from Mr Robert Smillie "You want another month of slaughter." After that, Mr Walsh had not a dog's chance. Mr Ben Turner rose and said that he did not like the war aims, because there was too little of the Bible in them; but they made for peace, and he was for peace now, this instant. Almost his next sentence began "Our German friends." He hammered poor Mr Walsh with trenchant repetitions of his chivalrous Christian phrase, and steamrollered him amid thun-

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

derous plaudits. The war aims went through triumphantly as peace terms. They have spread a hope of peace over our Christmas.

I am sorry to have to break the spell; but they are not peace terms. They are the gage of battle thrown at the feet of every Government in Europe, not excepting our own Foreign Office. In spite of the climb down that has occurred, they do not approach any terms that we could dictate to the Germans except as victors. The Labor party itself climbed down from its position of August last by substituting a plebiscite for French conquest in the case of Alsace-Lorraine. Mr Lloyd George, in swallowing the revised version, climbed down from the internationalization of Constantinople to leaving the Turk in possession of it. Mr Wilson, who, in his reply to the Pope, had declared that if Germany did not democratize her Constitution the United States would smash her, climbed down with the words "Neither do we presume to suggest to Germany any alteration or modification of her institutions."

These concessions seem so significant, and any sort of definite war aims must seem so clear and reasonable in contrast with the crude ravings they replace, that we are for the moment cheated into believing that the Germans must think them as moderate as they seem to us. Let us not deceive ourselves. Take three items from the Labor war aims by way of sample.

1. The dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, decayed as it is, may appear a mere make-weight in Camberwell; but in Constantinople it will be a matter of fighting *jusqu'au bout*.

2. Alsace-Lorraine is the very trophy of victory in the war between France and Germany; and the suggestion of a plebiscite does not alter that situation in the least; for what Frenchman with an ounce of fight left in him would consent to such a plebiscite being taken until the German army had evacuated the territory and left the inhabitants free to vote? It is hard enough for a Frenchman to consent even to a voluntary evacuation of the north of France: all the pugnacity and pride in him must cry out "We shall not accept your offer to evacuate: you shall go as you

CATACLYSM

came, fighting every inch of the way, or running."

3. The proposal of a League of Nations protectorate for the African colonies does not touch those colonies which the Union of South Africa has taken; and we dare not ask General Smuts to give them back to Germany.

I could add to this list of fighting points; but these are enough. The Germans have replied that the terms are the terms dictated by a victor, and that we are not victorious yet. And they are quite right. The sins of which this war is the punishment are not yet expiated either in Germany or here; and there is nothing for it but to set our teeth; tighten our belts; and go through with it.

Nevertheless there are incalculable factors in the case. One is the revolt of the human conscience against war. When everything that can be said for war has been said a thousand times; when to the wretched plea that the distribution of our wealth was so bad, the condition of our people so poor, and our public sloth and carelessness so disastrous that an iron scourge was needed to drive us to do better, we add the less disgraceful claim that pride, honor, courage, and defiance of death flame up in war into a refiner's fire, yet nothing can conceal the blasting folly, the abominable wickedness, the cruelty and slavery with which war wrecks Life's vengeance on those who will respond to no gentler or holier stimulus. In the midst of our stale paraphrases of the heroics of Henry V our eye lights on some name of youthful promise in the Roll of Honor, and sees suddenly through the splendid mask of victory to the grinning skull beneath. It is this incalculable factor that makes the Russian Revolution so formidable.

Yet here again I must sorrowfully dispel the illusion that the Russian Revolution makes for peace. Our patriots, always seizing the wrong end of the stick, are in full cry against "a separate peace" by Russia. What they would dread if they had any grasp of the situation is a separate war by Russia: a fight to a finish not only with the German throne, but with all thrones; a war that will go on when the rest of the belligerents want to stop; a war that may develop into a blaze of civil wars in England, France,

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

and Italy, with the Foreign Offices and Courts and Capitalists fighting to restore the Tsar, and the "proletarians of all lands" fighting to reproduce the Russian Revolution in their own country. What has happened so far is a very old thing: the world has many times before seen the kings of the earth rise up and the rulers take counsel together. But when peoples with new Bibles and new Jewish prophets do the same, there will be no more use for the middle class ignorance that deals with such a danger by a refusal of passports to those who alone understand it. There is a war to be averted ten times more terrible than that war which we are told to get on with by fools who imagine that we have any choice in the matter, and flick their little whips at the earth to make it go round the sun. Which of us would not stop the war tomorrow if he could? Which of us can?

For my own part I am a Jusqu'auboutist. I do not want this war to be compromised as long as it will be possible for any of the belligerent Powers afterwards to pretend that if it had only gone on for another year it would have won. If we win there will be such a surge of exultation throughout the country that every counsel of moderation or prudence will be swept away as irresistibly as Bismarck and the Socialists were swept away in 1871, when they asked their countrymen to spare Alsace-Lorraine. The same thing will happen in Germany if the central empires win. It is our business to see that they do not win. It is their business to see that we do not win. When both sides become convinced that neither of them can both win and survive the effort then it will be time to talk of peace. Until then, I shall not join the ranks of those kindly people who cry peace when there is no peace.

The reader, if old enough, will be reminded by the above letter of how our Labor leaders, obviously superior to the rest of our statesmen in their knowledge of foreign countries and political movements (as distinguished from ambassadors' dinner parties and diplomats' chatter) besides having universally current good

CATACLYSM

manners (as distinguished from West End airs) and therefore the very men to keep us in the most harmonious possible touch with the Continent, were during the war carefully locked into England as disaffected fellows who would engineer our defeat if not tethered to our shores and kept under the strictest surveillance. Our pleasant governing classes were, as usual, baffled and duped by their own snobbery and ignorance of real organic human society both at home and abroad. They refused passports to the people they should have put on the footing of King's Messengers and showered facilities on reactionary mischief makers. The Henderson incident, a masterpiece of misjudged insolence, gave the measure of their ridiculous class limitations and suburban scale of social values. It is now clear to all the world that it would have been an excellent stroke of business to make Mr Henderson Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs instead of wasting him on the despised and resented Education Department; but Mr Lloyd George would have regarded anyone proposing such a thing as a manifest lunatic. One result of such purely snobbish blindness on his part was that Mr Henderson presently made himself Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and locked Mr Lloyd George out of every office in Downing Street and Whitehall.

The letter shews also how the fear of disastrous defeat was giving way to a dread of certain-to-be-abused victory. How well founded that dread was appeared later on at Versailles.

The blundering over passports was accompanied by plentiful blundering in the exercise of the censorship. After the samples I have given of what I was allowed to publish without official interference it may seem ungrateful of me to complain; and I certainly do not do so on my own account, though whether my immunity was a proof of the censorship's enlightenment or of its slavery to easily evaded rules of thumb and its habit of firing at the wrong target may be an open question. I willingly give it the benefit of the doubt, as it was so good to me. But the suppression of the *Globe* newspaper, which, though a Conservative organ, had criticized the Government editorially, after allowing me to do so personally, was not a creditable incident; and when it came

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

to molesting The Nation, which had stood by me so courageously, I was moved to strike a blow for my friend Massingham as follows.

THE MILITARY CENSORSHIP

(*From The Nation of the 21st April 1917*)

SIR: The mischief of suppressing the export of a whole newspaper issue is that nobody knows which article in it is being suppressed; and wrong guesses may run through Europe with consequences undreamt-of by the censors. For example, many persons thought that your offence was your note on the open declarations of sympathy with the Republican solution of the Russian difficulty ventilated at the Albert Hall meeting. As everyone expects our Foreign Office to throw itself heart and soul into the work of restoring the Romanoffs as it restored the Bourbons after Waterloo, the suppression was naturally interpreted as the first move in this direction. Now it is just this Junker element in our politics that makes our relations with the French, American, and Russian Republics so precarious; hence nothing more unfortunate in the way of a temporary misunderstanding could have occurred. My own experience is that no censorship can be expected to supply the high quality of political judgment that can interfere with communications between London and the rest of the world without risking more harm than good. I write myself with my eye continually abroad: I expect to be quoted by the Germans and the Americans and the neutrals, and pontificate with that in view, and without the least regard for home consumption. And just because I do not write for Berlin what Bayswater likes to read, Bayswater would stop my articles if it could, and would allow nothing to be exported but our vainglorious and vituperative proclamations of the eternal righteousness of Bayswater, and its willingness to patronize such districts of immoral Europe as may deserve well by supporting Bayswater against the barbarism of Berlin: proclamations which, though delightful to the British palate, exasperate neutrals and foreigners to such a pitch that one finds the public opinion of the north of Europe re-

CATACLYSM

peatedly hardening into a conviction that of the two insufferably conceited and aggressive peoples, the English and the Germans, the Germans are to be preferred, not as being morally better, but as being more frank, and consequently less irritating, about their wickedness. If it were not for papers like *The Nation* there would be no standing us. Now it is just for saving the situation in this way that *The Nation* has been suppressed, whilst all the raving Jingo papers which are aggravating it are left free to provide Berlin with "Sidelights on England." Yet we can see plainly enough that however agreeable the articles of Reventlow may be to German patriotism, they bring Germany into contempt abroad, whilst the articles of Maximilian Harden force us to recognize the respectable and formidable elements in the German character. In precisely the same way *The Nation* makes the German respect England even when a dose of extracts from the London Jingo Press has persuaded him that we are a spiteful, negligible, contemptible mob.

Under such circumstances the suppression of *The Nation's* foreign circulation merely because it has admitted what all the world knows: namely, that the Germans got away very cleverly on the Somme front, shews how hopelessly inco-ordinate a purely military censorship is. The matter had much better be left to the conscience of the Press itself. We pay a heavy price for freedom of the Press in the abuse of it; but that is not mended by curtailing the freedom all on one side. To let Lord Northcliffe do his worst whilst refusing to let Mr Massingham do his best (or *vice versa* if you like) is to do the one thing that is worse than shutting up the Press altogether.

P.S. I am much impressed by the Government's explanation that the foreign circulation of your issue of April 7th was prohibited lest your already exported issue of March 3rd should discourage the Army. After this, our gallant fellows can never again doubt the lucidity of our Organizers of Victory.

CHAPTER XII

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

IN 1918 the war collapsed. The German commanders informed the civil authorities, with regret, that effective military defence against the Allies was no longer practicable. The Kaiser withdrew into Holland, and instead of receiving a vote of thanks from Europe for that very sensible and considerate step was reviled for it, apparently because he had not rushed on the enemy sword in hand and perished gloriously, like Byron's vision of the Duke of Brunswick at Waterloo. From which it is clear that even four years of sanguinary disillusion had not quite cured our romantic civilians of enjoying the war as a cinema show.

Now that enough of the truth is known to allow us to judge the Kaiser reasonably (if we must judge him at all) he comes out with a much solider character than the patriotic hotheads who railed at him. Also, of course, as much more of a statesman than any democratic novice; for what professional king born to his business could reign thirty years without knowing more about it than amateurs thrown up by the hazards of democracy into posts in which they have to control irresistible power and enormous expenditure without any personal experience of either? The significant fact for us is that when it came to the point of war, the Kaiser's personal qualifications were cancelled, because he had no power: the general military staff at once established a dictatorship and ousted him. I shewed then that he might have prevented England and America from attacking him in the rear, and made an attack by France very difficult, if he had appealed for the passive support of western democracy in a single combat with Russia. I added that his inculcated class limitations made him incapable of such a policy; but it now appears that his common sense was equal to the occasion, and that his desire was to leave Belgium alone and fight the eastern enemy without antagonizing his British cousin. The event proves that he was right. But on hearing his views, his Commander-in-Chief, General von Moltke the Second,

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

literally had a fit, because the army had arranged everything for the dash through Belgium (everything, that is, except the necessary artillery and supplies) and was entirely incapable of changing its mind in less than a hundred years or its plans in less than two. The unfortunate Kaiser found himself as subject to his General Staff as any corporal; and from that moment until, four years later, his generals told him that the game was up and that he had better clear out and leave the post of republican President to the least unpopular of them, he had rather less to do with the conduct and policy of the war than I had: our sole satisfaction being the poor one of saying "We told you so" when all the mischief was done. His actual comment on the war against us, "Ich habe es nicht gewollt," was, it seems, precisely true.

I shewed less sense than the Kaiser; for in spite of the obvious fact that nobody was paying the slightest attention to my criticisms and proposals, I was still self-important enough to offer my views to the impending Versailles Conference in a *brochure* published in 1919. I must allow it to speak for itself. Here it is.

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

ENTER HISTORY: EXIT ROMANCE

Before the Peace Conference can be discussed with any profit, it must be approached in the light of the facts, and not of the romance on which the popular imagination was fed during the war. It is in the nature of war that it can never be fought out on the merits of the *casus belli*. The common soldier, who has to risk life and limb in the business, like the common taxpayer and elector who has to support the soldier and maintain the Government in power, is never trusted with the truth. He may not be statesman enough to grasp its scope and importance. He may not be capable of understanding it at all. His narrow personal and parochial morality might be revolted by it. It is therefore deemed necessary to present the war to him as a crude melodrama in which his country is the hero and the enemy the villain. The present war is no exception to this rule. The legend of the crimes

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

of Germany, which has nerved millions of Britons and Americans, Frenchmen and Italians, to devote themselves to the destruction of the German military power through the wholesale slaughter of their fellow creatures, is no truer than the counter legend of the crimes of England which rallied millions of Germans to defend their country by the same ruinous method. Now that the war is over, the legends have served their purposes and must be discarded. They would not bear a moment's investigation in an impartial court. Even at the Peace Conference, which, far from being an impartial court, ordains simply the imposition of the will of the victors on the vanquished, the victors must for their own sakes be guided by the facts even if they still talk in terms of the fictions.

The first step in the discussion is, therefore, to set forth the facts in order.

England, as all the world knows, has, ever since she ceased to be raided and conquered by one continental invasion after another, Roman, Saxon, Danish, and Norman, taken the lesson of these raids and conquests closely to heart, and held steadily to certain conditions of self-preservation. These are, that her fleet must command the seas, and that no rival fleet or even combination of fleets must be capable of overcoming that fleet; that no continental State shall be allowed to acquire such a military predominance in Europe as to deprive England of the power of defeating it by throwing herself into the scale against it (in other words that England must hold the balance of power); and, in particular, that no Power of the first magnitude must be allowed to control the shores of the North Sea and thereby cut off England's military access to the continent.

This is the English equivalent of the Monroe Doctrine. It is quite useless to argue about its morality. It is imposed on England by necessity, just as the Monroe Doctrine, which is equally indefensible ethically, is imposed on the United States by necessity. Whilst war exists as an institution, and nations compete with one another for power, prestige, and "places in the sun," England will have to postulate these conditions and fight for

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

them whether her Government be composed of Quakers or Jingos. She will no more suffer a formidable rival to hold Antwerp than to hold Portsmouth. If the United States build a thousand new battleships England will build fifteen hundred new ones. If the French Republic rises on the ruins of the Prussian monarchy towards a European hegemony, England will combine with Germany to make that hegemony impossible. In the matter of foreign alliances she will allow Belgium just as much freedom of choice as she allows Ireland, and no more. She will act in this way because she must. She may never let her left hand know what her right is doing. Her non-interventionist Liberals, her Quakers, her littleminded insular commercialists may repudiate such designs; her Imperialists may profess *ententes cordiales* and unions of hearts and championships of oppressed little nationalities; her prelates may preach peace on earth and goodwill to men; but at the first extra battleship built abroad, at the first menace to Antwerp, at the first possibility of hegemony, all these calculations will be swept aside by the surge of patriotism or duped by diplomatic secrecy; and all the pieties and professions will veer round to the point at which the whole duty of man in England will be to maintain the freedom of the seas by the guardianship of the British fleet, to save Antwerp from a fate worse than death, and to rescue Europe from being crushed under the heel of a brutal despotism.

Do not dismiss this too lightly as British hypocrisy. There is always some solid brick underneath the whitewash. It may very easily be the interest of the world as well as of England that there shall not be a hegemony in Europe, and that access to its shores shall not be controlled by any Power that can afford to keep the door locked. The British fleet may in effect be found useful to the world as a maritime police force. To take an extreme instance, the defence of the Straits of Gibraltar by England, though apparently an outrageous violation of the Spanish form of the Monroe Doctrine, may save the Spanish taxpayer a huge annual charge whilst protecting him more effectually than a Spanish fortress could. In the affairs of nations as in those of individuals, it commonly

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

happens that the robust people who make it their first duty to take care of themselves are more useful to their neighbors than the idealists whose eyes are in the ends of the earth, and in whom the disease of suicidal mania takes on an air of virtue by calling itself self-sacrifice.

The present destruction of the military power of Germany is thus only a formal incident of British foreign policy, planned with all England's accustomed resolution, patience, craft, force, and triumphant success. Also with all her amazing power of concealing from herself what she is doing. The Englishman never knows what the British Foreign Office is about, not because the Foreign Office could effectively conceal its proceedings if they were resolutely investigated, but because he does not want to know. Some instinct tells him that he had better not know. He will not read the speeches of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs even when they are fully reported. He does not read the White Papers and Blue Books which deal with foreign policy; and if he did read them he could not read between the lines of the official formalities and courtesies, nor would he in any case learn the whole truth if he did; for diplomacy is conducted mostly by private correspondence which even the King has no right to see. And whilst he abuses all the ministers of the domestic departments to his heart's content according to his party politics, he invariably speaks with the deepest respect and awe of his foreign affairs minister at home and his proconsuls abroad. Hence you have such ridiculously exaggerated reputations as those of the late Lord Cromer and of Lord Grey of Fallodon. The downfall of the latter was due, not to his errors, but to the fact that the necessity for stuffing the British people with a fairy tale as to the nature and causes of the war made it impossible for him to claim his own triumph because it was of the kind which he himself had been denouncing as Machiavellism. When the Northcliffe Press turned and rent him for not having been Machiavellian enough in the matter of the Balkans, he could not defend himself without shaking the war *moral* of the British people and the British army by revealing that the generous indignation which was inspiring

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

them to fight Germany to the bitter end was founded on a patriotic fiction.

What would his defence have been if he could have uttered it? Simply the true history of his policy as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. And that history would have been as follows.

In 1892–1902 it became apparent that Germany was violating the first of the conditions of British self-preservation. She was building a fleet. A year or two later Lord Lee, then Mr Arthur Lee and civil lord of the Admiralty, convulsed diplomatic Europe for a fortnight by mentioning at a public dinner that there was no need to be alarmed, as England could, if put to it, sink the German fleet before her declaration of war had reached Berlin. This was true, but not calculated to reassure the Germans as to their security face to face with England. In 1906 the Liberals won a general election by a huge majority; but as the Liberals were distrusted in foreign affairs because they consisted so largely of commercial non-interventionists and Quaker Pacifists, they secured this victory by including among their leaders a number of gentlemen described as Liberal Imperialists, a title which left some doubt as to whether they were genuine Liberals, but no doubt whatever that they were sound Imperialists: that is, men alive to the growth of the German fleet, and faithful to the old British tradition in that matter. Three of them, Mr Asquith, Sir Edward Grey, and Mr Haldane, were entrusted with the foreign policy of the Government; and the nation, reassured, relapsed into its customary instinctive inattention to this dangerous topic.

Now that the war is over there is no longer any reason to conceal what followed. Lord Haldane's letter to *The Times* of the 18th December, 1918, completes the history begun in his speech from the chair at a lecture delivered by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle shortly after the beginning of the war, and in the nearly simultaneous speech of Mr Winston Churchill as to the preparation of the navy at the same period. The rest is in the parliamentary reports and the published diplomatic correspondence, including the memoranda discovered by the Germans in Brussels and not disowned by the British Foreign Office.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Immediately on the accession to power of the Liberal Imperialists the French Republic raised the question of the German peril. The Germans outnumbered the French by twenty millions, and were therefore in a condition of manifest military superiority. As the subjugation of the French Republic would produce a German hegemony, it was clearly part of the traditional British policy to prevent such a subjugation. Accordingly it was quietly agreed that in the event of a German invasion of France, Britain should not only support France with the North Sea Fleet, but send a military expedition to reinforce the French army. As it was foreseen that a German invasion must as a matter of strategical necessity be made through Belgium, the Belgians were warned that they would be expected to resist, and promised that England would see them through. The Belgians, thus caught "between the pass and fell incenséd points of mighty opposites," could only demand exact particulars of the assistance to be given them. The number of troops and the number of days within which these troops would be landed at their ports were specified. The Belgians finally expressed a hope that troops would not be sent into their country uninvited. They were told, in effect, that in the event of a German invasion England would defend the soil of Belgium, invited or uninvited; and the Belgians resigned themselves to their fate accordingly.

The British Imperialists then put their preparation vigorously in hand. Lord Haldane, as Secretary of State for War, set to work with Sir Douglas Haig to reorganize the British army. It was impossible to introduce conscription in the then lazy and luxurious phase of public opinion; but the promised expedition was prepared and trained with a view to the work that awaited it; a territorial force was established to deal with such raids as might slip through the fence of the navy; General French was instructed to prepare himself for the command of the expeditionary force by studying the ground in Flanders; the provision of artillery was looked to; and a huge accumulation of ammunition for the navy was begun.

The result was that when the war broke out, England was, up

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

to the limit of her engagements, by far the best prepared of all the belligerents. Her program was carried out with plenty to spare, and without a hitch. The navy was invincible. The military expedition, in greater numbers and in a shorter time than had been promised, was sent across the sea without the loss of a single man. After discounting all blunders and all reverses, and admitting that our engagements, and consequently our preparation, fell far short of our real commitments and responsibilities, we can still claim that Germany was not only hopelessly blockaded, but outwitted, outprepared, outgeneraled, outfought, outflown, outgassed, outtanked, outraided, outbombed, and finally brought to her knees at England's feet more abjectly than Philip, or Louis, or Napoleon, or any of the old rivals of the British Lion. It has been an amazing and magnificent achievement, of which the English themselves will not become conscious until some eloquent historian, a century hence, tells them what to think about it.

On the other hand, the Germans, considering their prodigious military reputation, a reputation created partly by their cheap military and moral victory over bankrupt Bonapartism in 1871, and partly by the romancings of German officers with a literary turn, were comparatively unprepared and incompetent. They had not a single torpedo ready for the expedition as it crossed the sea. They attacked Liège with field guns, though every artillerist in Europe knew that they might as well have attacked it with pop-guns; and before they got up some Austrian siege guns, they had lost their one chance of winning the war. They rushed on Paris without provisions or munitions, and had to retreat and scrap their general in the face of a breathless Europe. They introduced clouds of poisonous gas under climatic conditions which made it more deadly to them than to their enemy. They had grasped the importance of the machine gun, which soon threatened to make the war impossible; but the British invented the tank and checkmated the machine gun. The world-famous German organization and efficiency proved a sentimental dream; and its final collapse was so complete, so sudden, and so ludicrous, that the astonished victors were for some time more disconcerted than triumphant.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

I must now try to explain how this apparently simple and direct struggle between two rival Powers, eight years of which were occupied in manoeuvring for position, and only four in actual fighting, was masked by such a bewildering camouflage of cross purposes, mystifications, party moves, and soul conflicts between dreams of martial glory and Christian pacifist compunction, that not until the armistice was signed was it possible even to approach the truth in a public utterance of any kind, spoken or written. Even now men gape openmouthed at the story, and ask whether they or the narrator are mad.

To begin with, the Jingo Imperialists and the genuinely Liberal Imperialists were at cross purposes. Lord Haldane, a Scot, by far the ablest member of the Imperialist trio (Asquith-Grey-Haldane) who conducted the policy, and, as Secretary of State for War, the acting partner of the combination, foresaw the war as a horrible possibility to be avoided at all costs short of subjugation; and he did what a man, a Liberal, and a philosopher could to maintain friendly relations with the Germans: a course which, when the war broke out, earned him black ingratitude, bitter vituperation, and even threats of impeachment as "the friend of Germany." His two English colleagues merely drifted into the combination under French pressure, and, being peaceable good-natured persons, hoped that the Kaiser would keep quiet. The Jingos, on the other hand, were eager for a fight with Germany. Many of them advocated a surprise attack on the German fleet. About a year before the war, on the initiative of a German Count, friendly addresses were exchanged between the leading men of both countries, full of platitudes about Shakespear and Goethe. A sentence was inserted in the first draft of the British address to the effect that the possession by Germany of a powerful fleet, far from being a subject of jealousy, could only be regarded as an additional guarantee of civilization. It was found impossible to obtain the necessary British signatures until that sentence was expunged. Evidently those who refused to sign it and those who consented were in very different attitudes. Men who were making a necessary provision for defence in the event of an attack by

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

Germany were inextricably confused in the same party with men who could hardly be induced to wait for a decent pretext before springing the mine so carefully dug. To the latter the avoidance of the war would have been the worst misfortune that could have happened to England. Even when Germany capitulated they were still under such a terror of peace that they called her collapse "a peace offensive." There is a good deal to be said for their view from the Militarist and British Leonine standpoint. I am not here criticizing it adversely: I am only chronicling the contrarieties of opinion and feeling that existed in the Imperialist camp.

Now if this had been the only division in the party and in the country, it would not have mattered, as the two sides agreed on the practical part of the policy. Both were equally determined to place the British Empire in a position to reduce the German Empire to the degree of a second-rate Power if she moved towards a hegemony, and to keep ahead of her in naval shipbuilding. But there were other sections whose secession would have wrecked the Liberal Government, and who were fundamentally opposed to the policy. First there were the commercial non-interventionists, Cobdenites, Gladstonians, and George Washingtonians, who objected to meddling in continental quarrels, and knew that huge profits could be made out of a war by neutrals supplying the combatants with war materials. With them on the practical point were the Quakers, always important in Liberal party politics, objecting to war as sinful. Also, of course, the many members who were simply incapable of foreign policy.

The attitude of the Labor Party was not so simple. Though there was and is plenty of British Bulldog Jingoism in the rank and file of the Labor Party, and also among its leaders, the dynamic section, to which the party owed its formation and which supplies most of its ideas, are mainly Socialists and Internationalists who well know that the traditions of the British Lion have no future, and that the interests of all proletarians are identical, and, as between one country and another, pacific. They were, it is true, far more determined to overthrow the Hohenzollernist Junkerdom than the Jingos; but they wished to destroy Junker-

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

dom both at home and abroad by a combination of Labor at home and abroad, whereas the capitalist Jingos aimed simply at the supremacy of British over German Junkerdom.

Further, the Labor Party itself was divided into idealist Pacifists who wished to stop the war, and Realists who knew that the war must be fought to a finish, and who hoped that when Junkers fell out working men would come to their own. On one point, however, Labor was unanimous and irreconcilable. The Liberal Imperialists had been led by their military advisers, by French pressure, and, from the Labor point of view, largely by class instinct, into the stupendous moral blunder of allowing themselves to be made accomplices in an open and flagrant crime against civilization committed by the French Republic. This was nothing less than an alliance with the abominable despotism of the Russian Tsardom. On the surface the military advantages of this alliance seemed unquestionable. Russia commanded the eastern frontiers of the German and Austrian Empires, and could thus complete the famous encirclement (*Einkreisung*) which was the masterstroke of the Allied strategy. No better illustration could be found of the shallowness of professional military realism. The Tsardom, long obsolete, and rotten with corruption, cruelty, ignorance, and the incoherence, contradiction, and weakness which are necessary conditions of autocracy, conducted as it must be by thousands of deputy autocrats in no sort of organic relation to one another, was tottering on the brink of revolution, as the Labor Party well knew. It was therefore perilously untrustworthy as a military ally.

Besides, it was clearly the business of western Europe to support Germany, in the interest of civilization, against a barbarous anachronism like the Tsardom. No western Power could conspire with Russia to overthrow Germany without putting itself hopelessly in the wrong morally, unless it could prove that there was no safe alternative, and that self-preservation drove it to this desperate step. But no such proof was possible. It is true that France and England needed an additional ally. They were faced by a threefold alliance of Germany, Austria, and Italy (the Triplice);

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

and the Kaiser was cultivating a ridiculous but dangerous *entente* with Islam, which meant Turkey. A triple alliance was therefore necessary to England and France. But there was an alternative to an alliance with Russia, very obvious to a democrat, if not to a countryhouse diplomatist. That alternative was an alliance with the United States of America. Events have proved that this was the right alternative not only morally but militarily. Why was it not chosen?

Well, there were diplomatic as well as strategic reasons against it. The United States were still in the Washingtonian phase of non-intervention; and the Imperialism of the late Colonel Roosevelt could not see very far, though it could see very red. It could see just far enough to understand that it was not America's business to maintain Britain as ruler of the seas and holder of the European balance of power. The United States had no more interest in these British traditions than the Central Empires themselves. To bring them into the Alliance it would have been necessary to appeal to their interest in the peace of the world and in the substitution of Federal Republicanism for Empire as the prevalent form of government in Europe. An alliance of the United States with Russia was quite out of the question. There was nothing for it but either to remodel the anti-German combination so as to substitute America for Russia, or leave it as it was, and accept the French alliance with Russia as part of it.

Such a remodelling was beyond Sir Edward Grey's capacity, and highly uncongenial to his class traditions and sympathies as a typical British Junker. He took to the Russian alliance as a duck takes to water; and the Tsardom, with the French Republic in one pocket and the British Empire in the other, abandoned the little self-restraint which the scruples of the democrat west had hitherto imposed on it, and let itself go in Persia and elsewhere with the certainty that everything to its discredit would now be kept out of the British and French papers. From this time forth The Times no longer hailed the assassination of Grand Dukes and Governors of Finland with a very thinly paraphrased "Serve him right!"; and Russia's reputation rose as the Tsardom's

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

conduct grew worse. Yet the attempt at concealment was only half successful. Nothing could smother the thundering voice of Tolstoy, nor silence the thousand minor voices that clamored for judgment on the vilest surviving tyranny in Europe. Paris swallowed a visit from the Tsar, and even made much of him; but when he proposed to visit England the agitation against him was so furious that Mr Asquith dared not allow him to land, much less confess to the Labor Party and to the people that the Liberal Imperialists had virtually joined hands with the Tsar in a secret compact against a much more civilized neighboring State. The Russian connection thus forced Mr Asquith to a secrecy which did not stop short of flat denials, made by himself and Sir Edward Grey in reply to questions in the House of Commons on more than one occasion, that there was any binding engagement between Britain and France. The two Powers actually went to the length of exchanging letters stating formally that there was no binding engagement; so that these denials might be technically true. But none the less they were misleading and were meant to be misleading. A true reply to the questions would have run "There is no binding engagement between England and France in the legal sense; but if Germany attacks France, whether through Belgium or not, and England does not send the British fleet and an expeditionary force to France's aid, England will be dishonoured to the last page of her history." That would have been the truth: anything short of it had the effect of a lie; and naturally, when the truth came out later, those who were deceived refused to make the fine distinctions with which Mr Asquith and Sir Edward saved their consciences and their party.

And so the secrecy of the Russian alliance went on, with all its evil consequences. It was so evident that Sir Edward Grey was unequal to the situation, that in desperation I, as a private individual, suggested a line of action when Prince Lichnowsky was appointed German ambassador in London. Under the impression that well-known authors and sociologists enjoy the same consideration in England as in Germany, he invited me to visit him at the embassy, and even went so far as to say that a place

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

should always be ready for me at his table. As it happened, I had just induced *The Daily Chronicle* to place its columns at my disposal for a proposed solution of the Franco-German difficulty. I had urged that for the sake of averting war, England should, as the holder of the balance of power, reinforce her army, and declare, officially and unequivocally, that if Germany attacked France, England would throw in her sword on the side of France, balancing this threat by a counter assurance that if Germany were attacked by Russia or France or both, she would defend Germany. I pointed out that this would have the effect of producing a combination of England, France, and Germany to keep the peace of Europe; that the weaker Northern States, Belgium and Holland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark, would immediately join it; that the United States would have every reason to do the same; and that the final result would be a combination of western democracy against war from the Carpathians to the Rocky Mountains. The dead silence which followed this proposal in the Press was inevitable; for as I was not a party politician, nor a famous cricketer, jockey, or glovefighter, neither the political columns nor the stunt columns of the British Press were concerned with me: I might as well have been Fielding, Goldsmith, Blake, Dickens, Hardy, Wells, or Bennett for all the attention my political ideas received from the newspapers. But the newspapers have very little to do with diplomacy; and my suggestion was offered to the diplomatists. Unfortunately, it demanded certain positive qualities in which Sir Edward Grey was deficient. He was a busily agreeable drifter, trusting to amiable conferences to smooth over difficulties, and compliant with established power to such a degree that not even the Denshawai atrocity in Egypt nor the outrageous proceedings of the Russians in Persia had moved him to make himself disagreeable to the Anglo-Egyptian officials or to the Russian court, even though the cost of his compliance was the infamy of his country. To invite him to do anything with the sword of England except hide it nervously behind his back and smile, and invite Europe to tea parties grandiloquently described as conferences, was to harness a mouse to a

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

steam roller. The only comment reported to me on my proposal was that if I were in the Foreign Office, there would be a European war in a fortnight. As I was not in the Foreign Office, there was a European war in eighteen months. The policy of drift proved, even on its own shewing, no more pacific than the policy of action.

As to Mr Asquith, I doubt whether Mr Asquith ever really had any policy at all. His years of office were very prosperous and comfortable years for the governing class; and as he shared that comfort and prosperity, and was blessed with an easy disposition and a ready talent that could deal plausibly with a difficulty when it arose, but could neither anticipate it nor remember it for a single day, he took things as he found them and would have been content to leave them as he found them, if only all the sleeping dogs had been allowed to lie by less placid spirits. Lord Haldane's case was different; but he was unfortunately neither Prime Minister nor Foreign Secretary: he was busy reorganizing the army and trying to keep the Kaiser from playing with fire. And, being a Scot with a trained and exercised intellect, he was not trusted by his English colleagues, who preferred not to know what they were doing lest they should become unable to deny it or perhaps even to do it without pains in their consciences.

And so my proposal inevitably came to nothing. There was nothing to be done but drift along in the hope that as there was neither a Napoleon nor a Bismarck in the field, and Sir Edward Grey was only one of a dozen diplomatic drifters, Europe might drift into a new situation without a collision. The hope was disappointed. England did not "muddle through" this time. The Serbs assassinated the Austrian heir apparent; Austria sent a furious ultimatum to Serbia; Russia rallied to the defence of the Slav and mobilized against Austria; and Germany, being Austria's ally, and well aware that France was the ally of Russia, dashed at France in the hope of smashing her before Russia could bring her cumbrous forces to bear effectively. Then the British battery was unmasked at last, and the ambush let loose on the doomed empires that had presumed to challenge England's naval suprem-

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

acy and to move towards Antwerp. When I called it "the last spring of the British Lion," the Lion was so pleased that he could not help cheering my remark even whilst he ground his teeth with fury at me for tearing off the sheepskin in which he was still masquerading.

Up to the last Sir Edward Grey clung to the sheepskin. He could perhaps have prevented the war even at the eleventh hour by declaring, as Sazonoff and Cambon implored him to declare, that Britain would fight if Germany attacked France, and by telling the Kaiser that if Russia attacked him he might trust to western Democracy to allow him a fair fight with his barbarous eastern enemy. Had France repudiated that honorable understanding—and it is hard to believe that public opinion in France would have tolerated such a repudiation—the Kaiser would have had only France and Russia to fight instead of virtually the whole world. But Sir Edward would not. He fussed; he palpitated; he begged for another little conference; he would answer for nothing, not even for a defence of Belgium. He did nothing and said everything except the one thing that might have kept Germany's hands off France. Had he said it, he would have baulked the spring of the British Lion. And the British Lion did not intend to be baulked. From that moment until the lion had his prey helpless in his claws there was only one really valid word in England about peace; and that was that those who preached it were the enemies of their country. Peace proposals were called peace offensives.

I am very far from condemning this attitude. I could make a fairly strong case for it as having the root of the actual situation in it. Although M. Clemenceau has since committed himself to the opinion of Cambon and Sazonoff, not to mention my own, that the war would have been staved off if Germany had been warned of the certainty of British intervention, I can conceive myself doing rationally what Lord Grey did instinctively. If the war had to come, it was important that it should come before the German fleet was as powerful as the British. And England can hardly be reproached for fighting and conquering, instead of

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

contriving that Germany should exhaust herself in a struggle with Russia from which she might well have emerged more formidable than ever. But England cannot claim both the laurel and the olive. If she did everything to postpone the war except the thing that might conceivably have postponed it, History will certainly conclude that she did not postpone it simply because at bottom she did not want to postpone it. It is significant that none of us, British Imperialist or other, put any heart into preventing it.

The reader will now fully understand the burst of feeling against the Government which the outbreak of the war provoked in the British parliament among those who had not been in the secret. The old Liberal Non-Interventionists were furious at having been duped for eight years. The Quakers were horrified. The Labor leaders raged because a compact which involved the lives of millions of men had been made behind the backs of those men; and the Russian alliance was loathsome to them. Lord Morley and Charles Trevelyan, with Mr John Burns, wiped the dust of the Government from their feet. Socialist Internationalists like Messrs Ramsay MacDonald, Snowden, and Anderson made up their minds that though the German Junkers must be brought down, they should be brought down on the heads of the British Junkers who had planned the war. The Press branded all the malcontents as pro-Germans, and described them as hunted fugitives; but the enormous applause with which they were received in large popular meetings and congresses shewed that the working classes were not hoodwinked as completely as the middle classes. To avoid a defeat of the Government in the face of the enemy, Mr Asquith had to make another secret compact: this time with the Opposition leaders, who agreed to support him against his deserters on condition that he surrendered all points in controversy between them for the duration of the war. But this did not save the party for long. The Opposition soon wearied of allowing the Liberals all the credit of conducting the war, and the loaves and fishes of office as well. They betrayed the compact to the country and forced a coalition on Mr Asquith. This revelation finished his career. A secret understanding with France to

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

defeat German ambition was one thing: a secret plot with Lord Lansdowne and Mr Bonar Law to throw over the Liberal program was quite another. The strain was too great. Mr Lloyd George, who had come into the war party at the twelfth hour on the popular but really quite irrelevant issue of the violation of Belgian neutrality, not only became Prime Minister and War Lord in place of Mr Asquith, but presently threw him out of the coalition as a negligible quantity, Sir Edward Grey being "kicked upstairs" out of the Foreign Office into the House of Lords.

One would have supposed that the two discarded statesmen would have waited only for the signing of the armistice to turn the tables on their supplanter by claiming and proving that they and Lord Haldane had, in spite of Mr Lloyd George, *ci-devant* "pro-Boer," planned and executed the magnificently successful stroke which had rescued the British Empire from the contempt into which its very poor military record in the South African war had plunged it, and restored it to its ancient glory as the most formidable Power in the world and the arbiter of Europe. But having drifted into their policy on the French initiative and carried it out with true English empiricism, they hardly knew what they had done. Lord Haldane, who did know, did not let himself entirely loose until after the election. Yet it was on a hint from a speech of his that Mr Asquith, three days before the poll, suddenly made a belated bid for public support as the man to whom England owed her perfect preparation for the war. But as he had allowed the public to be stuffed for four years with the legend that England had been utterly unprepared for the war, and had never harbored a thought of unkindness to Germany, and as, further, the Northcliffe Press immediately suppressed his bid as completely as they suppressed the speeches of Mr Ramsay MacDonald, nobody noticed Mr Asquith's *volte-face*; and he was heavily defeated in his contest for the seat he had held easily for thirty years. The day after the election, Lord Haldane, in a long letter to *The Times* which that paper would have refused to publish six months earlier even if Lord Haldane could have been induced to write it at the risk of shaking the British *moral*, tore

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

away the last shreds of the Great Camouflage; and the Lion of Waterloo at last stood revealed, with the sheepskin and the ass's head flung off, and the once terrible Kaiser helpless in his claws. Nine hundred thousand Britons lay dead around the pedestal; but Britannia did not grudge the price: she will never ask Lord Haldane "What hast thou done with my legions?"

Unfortunately, the empiricism of Britannia, which enabled her to plan and win bit by bit without connecting one bit with another and thereby arriving at a clear consciousness of her policy, now prevents her from seeing that, having thrown over the pretence that she was innocently unprepared for the war, she cannot now come to the Peace Conference in an attitude of virtuous indignation founded on that pretence. She has not as yet put two and two together: her Press and her politicians still denounce Germany for the crime of preparing for war in the very same issues in which they quote Lord Haldane's description of how he outprepared the Germans. The Blackguards of England, a noisy but not, I hope, numerous undergrowth which has been tolerated and encouraged during the war to a disgraceful and dangerous extent, have openly demanded a judicial murder of the Kaiser, a wanton air-raid on Berlin, and the subsequent enslavement of the German people by impossible ransoms for a century to come. It flatters these people to hear that we were stronger and cleverer than the Germans, and that the Press photograph of the British Lion as half sheep, half donkey, was a fake. They are much less willing to learn that the German devil is as absurd a fable as the British angel. They want to revel in the consciousness of being victorious, successful and powerful, shocking humbugs if you will, but mighty, crafty, born rulers of men; yet they do not want to give the Germans fair play: they want moral excuses for skinning them alive; and on this point they must be resolutely tackled and held back and made to behave themselves. If no British statesman has courage and character enough to bully them, Mr Wilson and General Smuts must. If not, they may provoke a world situation in which anti-British combinations will be formed which I dare not describe in detail;

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

for they might spring into being at the flourish of a pen if that pen were too explicit. Suffice it to say that the destruction of Germany's prestige has left the British Empire in the position formerly held by her defeated foe: namely, that of the most dangerous and widely dreaded Imperial Power left in the world. And as America has helped to place her there, it is now necessary to go carefully into America's position in the matter.

It is clear that Mr Wilson cannot in the Peace Conference take his stand on British grounds. The ultimatum to Serbia, the violation of the neutrality of Belgium, the attack on France, are tenable points in our case because we went to war the moment Belgium was invaded; but the United States did not move in the matter, and are therefore out of court as far as these particular counts in the indictment against Germany are concerned. They not only remained out of the war but made a great deal of money out of it until the submarine campaign produced a situation in which neutrality was no longer possible. In this the United States behaved very prudently. They were able to give invaluable assistance to the Allies as neutrals. When they drew the sword at last they were able to come in as the determining factor in the conflict and thus make themselves the holders of the balance of power. In the meantime they had rid themselves of all their financial indebtedness to Europe, and compelled England to admit them to an increased share of the carrying trade. Above all, they had strengthened the moral position of Republicanism by producing at the right moment a man who, like Washington or Lincoln, easily dominated a colossal situation as spokesman of the highest ideals, whilst British and French demagogues could not rise above the rhetoric of the prize ring and the slop of the cinema "sub-title."

Yet even as England, with a very strong case and a still stronger hand, has discounted both the strength of her case and the prestige of her strength by substituting a ridiculous melodrama for the truth, the United States seem equally incapable of understanding their own position and equally determined to pose as the knights errant of the distressed damsels who have been rescued from the

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

dungeons of Kaiser Bill, the Demon Enchanter of Hunland. They will have it that their swords leaped from their scabbards to avenge Edith Cavell, and that the tearing up of the Scrap of Paper (now ignored by the Belgians themselves in the hour of their triumph) was to them as the rending of the veil of the temple. All this is very silly, and would make Mr Wilson very ridiculous in Paris if he attempted to impose it on his Allies there, much less on the Germans. The truth is, the foreign policy of the United States, like that of Britain, of France, of Germany, of Austria, of Italy, of Turkey, of Bulgaria, of Rumania and all the other belligerents, has been not a romantic policy but a policy of self-preservation; and such it will have to remain until the establishment of a supernational legislature, tribunal, and police makes it possible for nations to reject, as the principle of their foreign policy, the one principle that knows no law.

Meanwhile all diplomatists, however they may sympathize with Mr Wilson, must prepare for the next war as a means of avoiding it, knowing well all the time that such preparation will in the end get on the nerves of all the Powers, and precipitate the catastrophe. The United States, for instance, will have to place herself in a position to face the combined fleets of Britain and Japan; Japan will have to place herself in a position to face the combined fleets of the United States and Britain; and as fleets in the future will be not only marine, but submarine and celestial, the inland Powers will enter into the competition and try to make themselves proof against such a blockade as has just forced Germany to capitulate. It is idle to hope that any moral protest will suspend this manœuvring for the inside grip in the next war. If every one of the Powers had in office a Labor party boiling over with pacific enthusiasm, and had inscribed on its national arms "Proletarians of all lands, unite," none the less their diplomatists and soldiers, in the absence of a League of Nations, would have to prepare for the worst as carefully as if Junkerism were still in command of all the earth. If I myself were Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs or for War in a Labor or any other Government in England, I should resume the work of Lord

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

Haldane and Sir Douglas Haig without a moment's intermission; and if people talked to me about the League of Nations I should say that an army and navy in hand is worth ten Leagues of Nations in the bush, and that as long as the League did not exist I should act with reference to the armaments and Governments which do exist.

It is necessary to enforce this hard fact, because the earth is full of amiable people who believe that moral steam, unlike physical steam, is independent of engines and organization. It is of course nothing of the sort. The reason that lust for money and power prevail as they do against the nobler sentiments is simply that the people who want more money and more power have organized armaments to coerce those who desire to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth, and have also organized the Press and the public schools to persuade the masses that the pursuit of more money and more power is virtuous, heroic, and patriotic. This they do with the enormous advantage of being singleminded in the knowledge of what they want and the determination to get it at all costs (though, having got it, they become at once the most charming people imaginable). They are singleminded not only as to ends, but to means, the means being always the presentation to their opponents of the clear and universally intelligible alternative "Submit or be killed." In the meantime the idealists are singleminded neither as to ends nor means, being a motley crew "with a hundred religions and only one sauce," carrying individualism to such a degree that each of them confronts the enemy in a minority, though if they combined they would be in a majority of at least four to one. The singleminded "divide and govern," because they have a common religion and a common philosophy of life. The religion may be the worship of Mammon, and the philosophy that of a pirate; but they are all effectively agreed on it, and will cut throats for its sake; and so they will triumph until their opponents learn the lesson and find unity in a common religion and philosophy of their own.

As the League of Nations will be an attempt to focus the coercive forces, moral and physical, of idealism, it must not be

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

conceived as a Tolstoyan celebration, but as a very vigorous organization of resistance to evil, like a municipal police force. Nor will it make an end of the tyranny of self-preservation; for what else but that eternal tyranny is driving all the more thoughtful statesmen, Jingo as well as Internationalist, to insist on or at least accept the League? The next war, if permitted to occur, will be no "sport of kings," no game of chance played with live soldiers and won by changing them into dead ones, but a scientific attempt to destroy cities and kill civilians. Not the soldiers alone, but all of us, will have to live miserably in holes in the ground, afraid to look at the sky lest our white faces should betray us to a hostile aeroplane; for our houses will be heaps of charred bricks. The existing London record is a 600 lb. bomb which destroyed six houses and rendered twenty uninhabitable; and this bomb is already a middle-sized one. What the record may be for those unfortunate Rhine towns on which, during the last year of the war, the War Office boasted of having dropped 100 bombs for every one dropped in England by the Germans, is not yet known. What is known is that the British aeroplanes did what no German plane attempted in England. They swooped down into the streets of Treves and used their machine guns there. Under such conditions towns are not inhabitable; industry is not practicable; and life is not bearable. The notion that war is a beneficent gymnastic, moral and spiritual, is reduced to absurdity: one might as well make the same plea for hurricanes and earthquakes, or pretend that because a man is the better for swimming, he will, *a fortiori*, be the better for drowning.

And yet the sensational terrors of the high explosive, hurled from the clouds or shot up from the depths of the sea, are trifling compared to the horrors of the blockade. As the fumes of battle clear away, it becomes more and more apparent that the war was won by the British navy, at a stupendous cost to the whole world, both belligerent and neutral. Not bombardment, but starvation and civil ruin, have brought England's rivals to their knees; and this starvation and ruin have fallen heavily not only on neutral countries, but on England's own Allies, who have

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

escaped the fate of Russia and Germany only by being rationed from England. Russia was the first victim, even during her alliance with England. Then came the revolution, which stopped supplies from Britain. The stoppage forced Russia to make peace with the Central Empires to avert starvation; but the opening of her western frontier to German trade could not save her, because Germany had already been driven by the blockade to plunder Belgium to the last saucepan lid, to build her submarines out of the vitals of her own fleet, and to leave herself without tanks to fight the Allied machine guns. From the Ural Mountains to the shores of the North Sea there was starvation everywhere; and from Warsaw eastward there were whole countries of which it was affirmed without improbability that there was no child under seven years of age left alive. Even in America, no less than in Holland and the Scandinavian lands, large classes with small but formerly sufficient fixed incomes had those incomes deprived of half their purchasing power. After such a terrible demonstration of the might of the British navy, its possession and control by a single State must appear so dangerous to all the others that no one who grasped the situation shared the surprise of the innocents when the rejoicings over the armistice were suddenly jarred upon by the claim that the United States must possess an equally formidable fleet, and by the announcements of Admiral Badger and Mr Daniels as to the American shipbuilding program.

Thus we are back again at the point reached when the intention of Germany to build a rival fleet was realized in England, and the preparations for the great war began. Just as the lieutenants of the German and British navies, during the race of naval armaments which culminated at the Battle of Jutland, looked forward to "der Tag" when the preparations would be brought to the test of warfare, the lieutenants of the United States navy are already looking forward, quite properly and inevitably, to "The Day" when the British and American fleets shall fight for that power to blockade without which no nation can ever again feel safe whilst war remains tolerated as an institution. The duty of securing that power is henceforth the sacred duty of all patriots as long as the

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

present anarchy between nations leaves them with no security against ruin and subjugation except the power of self-preservation.

The more frankly this situation is faced the more intolerable does it become, and the more overwhelming seems the importance of President Wilson's demand for "the freedom of the seas." The small change of that freedom no longer presents any serious difficulty as between England and America, because America very early in the war forced England to pay for contraband taken from American ships; and it is not pretended that England, as a great carrying nation with a tradition of Free Trade, abuses her power by attempting to make private roads of indispensable maritime highways in peace. The real difficulty is that she can, and does, ruin half the world to save herself in time of war, and is, indeed, unable to obtain a decision by any other means; for it is evident that had all the ports been open and all the seas free throughout the war the armies might have fought for ever without having to surrender to famine. Indeed this is a vital part of England's case for the command of the sea; for if she could have won the war without it she would have no plea for insisting on retaining it except sheer arrogance. But its operation has proved also that the command of the sea means a power of life and death over Europe; and this constitutes a hegemony against which the world will rebel as surely as it rebelled against the mere threat of a Pan-German hegemony. England is still bound to fight to the last man and the last penny she can spare to maintain her command of the seas. But the United States and all the other non-British Powers are thereby driven to an equally stubborn resolution that no single State in the world shall command the seas.

There is no possible solution except the League of Nations solution as long as the problem exists. It cannot be solved by the American fleet sinking the British fleet: that would only transfer the command of the seas to America; and an American command of the seas would be just as objectionable as a British one. The problem might be removed by the two fleets going to the bottom simultaneously, each in trying to sink the other. But that is not an event which can become the object of British or American foreign

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

policy. The effective solution must be that the British fleet shall be sinkable by the combined fleets of the other Powers, but not by any one of them, or any combination of them that could easily be formed with a view to a hegemony. And this state of things can be brought about only by a League of Nations.

The main question, then, to be considered is the practicability of an efficient League of Nations. That it is practicable within certain limits, and that those limits will not disable it as a bar to any renewal of Armageddon in Europe and North America, I hope to demonstrate convincingly. But I must first deal with the Peace Conference as the nucleus of the League, and with the various interests which confront Mr Wilson as the advocate of his famous fourteen points.

The divisions in the internal affairs of Europe, reflected as they are in the United States, will tax Mr Wilson's diplomacy to the limit, and may possibly drive him to the point at which he may have to act as master of the situation rather than as negotiator and conciliator. The coalitions which the war has produced in all the allied countries have had to make a common profession of abhorrence of militarism and autocracy, and of an ardent desire to "make the world safe for democracy." But all the coalitions contain elements well known to be quite as militarist, quite as monarchical, quite as hostile to democracy as the most bigoted Hohenzollern or Hapsburg.

These elements, just because they are ultramilitarist, become necessarily dominant in a state of war, which imposes militarism and suspends popular liberties even in the most democratic States. It goes without saying that in the monarchical countries they are strongly anti-republican, and took their part in the war to get the better of the monarchies of Germany and Austria, not to abolish them. The moment their operations had the unintended effect of making Russia a republic, they turned against Russia, and are now actually making war on her with the object of restoring order, which to them means nothing else than the monarchical order. When they overshot their mark in the same way in the Central Empires, they began to use the blockade as a means of

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

crushing the German Republicans. They have, of course, a hundred plausible excuses for each step they take or propose in this direction; but not one of these excuses would be made by them if the boot were on the other leg, and the effect of the war had been to upset republics and substitute monarchies for them. When they deposed the King of Greece for being a pro-German, they did not impose a Republic on Greece with Mr Venizelos as President, which would have been the simplest matter in the world. Instead, they set Constantine's son on the throne. When the Kaiser fell, the only question they raised was whether his son or his grandson should succeed him. They call all Republicans except French and American ones Bolsheviks; and they would talk about President Wilson and President Poincaré exactly as their great grandfathers talked about Washington if they dared.

There is no concealment of all this; and it is not here alleged to the discredit of the Royalists. They have a right to their opinions, for which there is a great deal to be said, as the condition of the common people in France and America no less than in Russia and Poland shews. Democracy as it exists today has little more to say for itself than that its hopes and possibilities are infinite, whereas the possibilities of oligarchy and autocracy are limited to such an extent by their fundamental economic and psychic unsoundness that they can hardly be said to hold out any hopes at all. But they are not fraudulent except when they pretend to be democratic; and of this particular fraud the republics are ten times more guilty than the monarchies. Lincoln's famous formula of government of the people by the people for the people was always impossible as to its second count; for the people can no more govern than they can write plays or use the infinitesimal calculus. Even government by consent of the governed is impossible as long as people are so uneducated politically that they will not consent to be governed at all, and must therefore be governed, under one pretence or another, by main force. But government of the people for the people is possible, and is the goal of democracy. Now no political system at present existing on earth attains that goal, or is even visibly tending towards it. It has proved safer to be a frank traitor

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

under the Hohenzollerns, like Liebknecht, even in war time, than to be a Conservative Non-Interventionist in the United States of America; and Mr Wilson goes into the Peace Conference with the knowledge that if recriminations begin as to the condition of the people, the reasonableness of the distribution of the national income, the exploitation of child labor, the prevalence of Lynch law, the toleration of heterodox or anti-governmental opinion (even under Mr Wilson's own rule), the general level of culture, the cruelty of the criminal codes and the guarantees for justice in their administration, the honesty of the police, and the freedom of municipal and national politics from corruption, American republicanism will come out of the comparison with constitutional monarchy so badly that it will be very difficult for him with any countenance to take the position of a moral dictator imposing superior American political institutions on the rest of the world. Feudal barons are not so much worse than beef barons, nor Hohenzollern and Hapsburg kings than railway and kerosene kings, that he can offer a substitution of one for the other as a contribution to the emancipation of the human race. The most convincing democratic asset he has to shew is himself; and he may feel some delicacy about harping on that.

Moreover, what has just been said about the formal win-the-war coalitions of Europe is equally true about the virtual win-the-war coalition which stands behind Mr Wilson. Senator Lodge is hardly more of a democrat in foreign affairs than Lord Curzon; and the latest American elections have gone Mr Lodge's way. President Wilson will need that rare and mystical force of character that acts "on the evidence of things unseen" in the face of a very depressing mass of contrary evidence of things very glaringly visible. He has made an enormous impression in Europe as a great man: in America he seems to be regarded merely as the figure-head of his political party. The prophet is not without honor save in his own country. In Europe the President has become the banner bearer of the reserves of conscience and honor which the popular spoutings of M. Clemenceau and Mr Lloyd George only offend; but sometimes a surprised face is seen here

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

when this is admitted; and it is always the face of an American, and quite as likely an American Democrat as an American Republican. Thus we have the curious spectacle of an American statesman going into a European conference with a tremendous European moral backing, and a relatively feeble American one. When he asked for an expression of American support it was deliberately denied to him. He could not ask for an expression of European support; but it has been volunteered to him by every available means. Europe has earned the same right to say "our Wilson" as Germany earned to say "unser Shakespear." All Europe hails him as a godsend: half America groans under him as an affliction. It cannot be helped: no man can be great and popular at the same time before his death except at a distance; but there are times when the neighbors of illustrious men are in danger of making themselves ridiculous by the familiarity which expresses itself in the old formula "Woodrow Wilson a great man! Why, I knew his father." Rightly or wrongly, Europe is deeply impressed by Wilson, and is not impressed at all by the thousands of American ward bosses who feel superior to him without having succeeded in making Europe aware of their existence; and that fact must be accepted for the moment unless American democracy wishes to be set down as a political failure which has accidentally produced a greater individual success than it is capable of appreciating.

With all this in view we can see the Peace Conference as it really must be. It must consist largely of anti-democrats and anti-republicans who, by choosing their phrases prudently, can profess their real views with less risk than their opponents can contradict them. It will consist to some extent of democrats and republicans who have lost the courage of their opinions by living in a continual minority, and fighting vainly against a public school system by which every generation, no matter what phase of enlightenment it may have been born into through the efforts of some gifted and lucky band of reformers, is deliberately replunged into the ideas of the reign of Henry VIII; so that the stone of Sisyphus rolls back on the wretched reformers every thirty years, and re-

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

establishes the ideas of a feudalism thoroughly corrupted by capitalism. That is to say, all the members of the Conference will be Opportunists, though some of them will be seeking opportunities for reaction and some for progress. And the Reactionists, though ostensibly the anti-popular party, will be fortified by the certainty that their views can always be made to appeal strongly to popular prejudice, ignorance, and arrogance; whilst the reformers, ostensibly the party of the people, will have more cause to dread popular persecution than to depend on popular support.

In such a miserable situation political ambition, without scruple or principle, goes far. The greed and rancor which abuse victory by grasping at plunder and vengeance with both hands open and both eyes shut go still farther, because mere ambition will comply with them as the cheapest road to success. There is only one force that can beat both; and that force is the entirely mystic force of evolution applied through the sort of living engine we call the man of principle. Principle is the motive power in the engine: its working qualities are integrity and energy, conviction and courage, with reason and lucidity to shew them the way. It is because Europe knows in its heart that only such a living engine can dominate the faithless, the conventional, the feeble, the greedy, the intimidated, the parliamentarily demoralized figure-heads of the Conference, that Europe is proclaiming President Wilson as that man; not yet sure that he will hold out to the end as he has begun, but quite sure that there is no hope from the others. If he fails, Europe will either settle down in despair to drudge along until the next war is ready to engulf it, or else throw official and democratic parliaments and conferences to the winds, and try Syndicalism, Bolshevism, Spartacus dictatorship, and even intentional chaos and anarchy in order that they may work out their natural remedy through what bloodshed and destruction may be necessary sooner than trust any longer to established institutions that can do nothing but prepare for holocausts of which each as it approaches threatens to be the day of doom for civilization.

Here, then, is no little diplomatic job which any one of half

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

a dozen Cabinet fixtures might do as well as any other, but a labor of Hercules only to be achieved by a man who is *hors concours*: a genuine Worthy, too democratic to be a demagogue. For a mere demagogue, rallying the Progressives and bullying the Reactionaries, will not suffice. Any political platform pugilist can rally and bully. There must be force of such a quality that it need do neither: the force in the presence of which evil loses heart and goodwill takes it.

One may say that, so far, the claim of the American political system to be superior to the European system rests mainly on the single fact that in America it has been possible on three crucial occasions in history for a man of this force to be placed at the head of affairs in the United States, whereas in Europe, though such men exist, they are hopelessly outside politics: place and power being divided between the hereditary aristocrat (that is to say the aristocrat who is not necessarily an aristocrat at all) and the ambitious demagogue who has energy and histrionic instinct without exceptional intellect or exceptional character, and who is so dependent on electoral applause that when he gives way to a generous impulse and says something really splendid, he runs away from it at the first hoot from the nearest cad. If the man who came to the top in America by election finds himself at the top in Europe by simple moral gravitation, then American Republicanism has something to say for itself in spite of lynchings, Colorado labor wars, and child slaves in Carolina mills. That this phenomenon is genuinely Republican and not merely American is suggested by the fact that the one man whom the British Empire can claim as in the same class with President Wilson, and who has proved it by being admitted to the War Council without the smallest self-assertion as having an obvious natural right to that eminence, is General Smuts, a Republican by all his dominant characteristics and political antecedents, whose utmost modesty and good sense cannot enable him to help the British Government without a quaint air of helping a lame dog over a stile.

Now Mr Wilson's mission, I take it, is America's mission: that is, to stand for Republicanism in Europe. The position of Re-

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

publicanism changed greatly in Europe in the last years of the war, and even in its last hours. When the Tsardom fell, all the thrones rocked. When the Hohenzollerns and Hapsburgs fell, Europe changed from a continent in which, outside little privileged Switzerland, one important republic and a few tolerated toy ones were struggling to maintain a not highly respected existence amid a host of contemptuous kingdoms, menaced by legitimist pretenders within and hostile courts without, to a continent in which a handful of minor royalties, mostly the poor relations of the deposed emperors, hold on timidly to a few outlying minor thrones, diligently saving money for the inevitable day when they too must pack up and face the world as common citizens. The British throne alone stands steady, not without earnest professions that we are only "a crowned republic" after all, and being able to support that plea by pointing to the steady growth of all the worst features of French and American Republicanism in our political life.

The change is so enormous, and the circumstances of it so catastrophic, that Europe has not assimilated it yet. The extremely easy operation of putting the clock back recommends itself to a huge proportion of the people and of the governing classes as more feasible as well as more congenial than the very arduous operation of keeping it up to time. The Powers which are at present entertaining the Kaiser in Holland (for no expert in London society is taken in by the nonsense in the Press about his being there of his own accord as an unwelcome intruder) are much more disposed to put him back in Berlin than to take chances with a Social-Democratic Republic. The Labor agitation has not prevented M. Pichon from advocating war on the Russian Revolution as openly as Pitt did on the French Revolution. In short, just as the 1815 Allies, after making war on Napoleon in the character of the knights of liberty against tyranny, promptly re-established the Bourbons when they had disposed of "the Corsican usurper" under pretence of ridding the world of Jacobinism, the Allies of 1919 may easily slip into a restoration of monarchy in Russia, Poland, Austria, and Germany under pre-

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

tence of ridding the world of Bolshevism.

Mr Wilson can hardly become an accomplice in such a back-sliding. If he did, he would be entering on a course which would point to nothing short of the "restoration" of monarchy in the United States, and its imposition on the rest of the American continent. That reversion would not pay American Capitalism any better than it would please the American people; for Capitalism flourishes more luxuriantly in republics than in monarchies, and opens the political career much more widely to the commercial talent. There is a notion prevalent among the middle classes in England, especially the Liberal middle classes, that kings do not matter, as parliaments have now deprived them of their power. Those who see the governing classes from the inside know better. Reform, or change of any sort, is almost impossible when it touches the throne: that is why reform is always beginning at the bottom, and never where it mostly should begin, at the top. We can get a Factory Code in the teeth of the Manchester School after a long struggle; but a University and Public School code, an Army code, a Landed Estates code, are not even thought of: not because they are not far more needed than the palliations of the lot of the poor which are the staple of would-be-progressive politics, but because the court and the country house, the public schools and the army, are practically above the law.

Note, however, that it has been found impossible to impose this tyranny on the colonies. The attempt ended in America in the breaking away of New England, and the formation of a federal republic. To avoid the same disruption elsewhere, the British Empire had to grant to Canada, Australia, and South Africa constitutions which assimilate them to the federated republics, and make it impossible to impose on them the monarchical conditions which still prevail in London, and were supreme until the recent revolutions in Berlin, Vienna, and Petrograd. Before the war one could say that the whole of North America and Australia, and a considerable part of Africa, had reached the federal republican stage of political development, and were visibly lost for ever to what all good Americans call "this king business."

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

In the course of the war, the king business suddenly crashed in Russia, Germany, and Austria: that is, in the bulk of Europe, leaving a problem of political reconstruction that can be solved only in one of two ways: a restoration, or a system of federated republics. The French Republic, One and Indivisible, is conceivable in Russia, but hardly possible, whereas it is neither conceivable nor possible in Germany and Austria. What is both conceivable and possible is republican federation. We do not want the Austrian Empire, to which provinces like Bosnia owe so much of their material civilization, replaced by half a dozen Mexicos any more than we want the Hapsburgs back again.

Yet even a ramshackle empire may be an advance on an anarchy of warlike tribes. Let us not forget the experience of the United States. Federation is no more compatible than Empire with Secession. Federal Unions must keep together. No American can have the face to urge Bavaria and Prussia to break asunder instead of maintaining their organization in a German federated republic; and what is good for the German goose is good for the Austrian gander. No doubt present frontiers are unscientific and should be redrawn. But the only scientific frontiers are ethnographic frontiers; and until the League of Nations abolishes war the only politically possible frontiers are strategic frontiers, which are seldom ethnographic. Meanwhile the rule should be integration, not disruption.

And here it may be asked what is to happen to the centralized tyranny of the British Isles. What about Ireland? One quarter of Mr Wilson's constituents are either Irish or German; and, reasonably or unreasonably, they want him to settle both the German and Irish questions democratically. The Irish question is very simple. Home Rule is nonsense, and always has been nonsense. Neither Gladstone nor Parnell, Redmond nor Mr Asquith, could draft a Home Rule Bill that had any sort of constitutional logic in it; and this not because they were overrated statesmen, but because they tried to conduct a surgical operation on two nations as if it concerned only one. Ireland must choose between being in the British Empire and being out of it. If she chooses to be out of it, it

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

must be as a nominally independent State, like Greece or Belgium, whose recent experiences of nominal independence and actual subjugation are hardly encouraging; yet to attain even this position the Irish must wait for a miracle which will reduce the British Empire to impotence. In view of what has just happened the wait would be a long one. What is more, Separatist Ireland cannot count upon the sympathy of the United States, which in the Civil War of 1861 committed themselves to the principle of Unionism at all costs. If, however, Ireland decides to remain in the British Empire voluntarily she may fairly claim to be in it on the same terms as England. She cannot reasonably demand more or honorably accept less. Now it is impossible to effect this without making a new constitution for England as well as for Ireland. Ireland must be represented in a central parliament; but her representation in an English parliament is an outrage on England: that is why there must be distinct central and national parliaments. England suffers more from the absence of a national English parliament than Ireland, which, having no parliament of its own, has played the cuckoo in the House of Commons by thrusting the domestic affairs of Ireland upon it almost to the exclusion of English domestic affairs. Federation of the British Isles is the obvious solution. It is hard to see on what other lines Mr Wilson, as a Republican Federalist, can press for a settlement of the Irish question. His only ground for interfering is that the United States must be compromised and internally distracted by their alliance with Great Britain as long as the government of Ireland openly sets at nought every principle on which the alliance is supposed to be based. He certainly cannot suggest for Ireland a Secession which his own Federation denied to Virginia, Alabama, and the rest at the price of a most bloody civil war.

No one seems yet to have noticed how imperative this question of the federation of the British Isles has become under the strain of the war and the danger of its recurrence. In imperial affairs there is no responsible government in Great Britain at all, because there is no imperial parliament. Parliament was not consulted as to whether we should go to war or not: it was simply

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

informed by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs that our forces had been placed at the disposition of the Franco-Russian Alliance the day before, and that we were members of the Alliance and already at war. Later on, when a treaty was made between the Allies that none of them should make peace until all the others were satisfied, a treaty obviously either impracticable or superfluous (it would have been broken by the Tsar if he had not been swept away, leaving it to be broken at Brest-Litovsk), the House of Commons was not asked for its views about it: the accomplished fact was announced without by-your-leave. The secret treaties which followed were not even announced. In short, for purposes of foreign policy the British Empire is governed by the Foreign Office and not by Parliament. Parliament is supposed to be able to refuse to vote supplies, and thereby have the last word in the matter. In fact it has no such power; for a refusal to fight during a war actually in progress means national suicide. The war might conceivably have been prevented by an imperial parliament in 1906, when it was strategically begun by the Foreign Office, though even that is doubtful; for a reference to so well known a book as Mr H. G. Wells's *War of the Worlds*, published in 1898, will shew that even then "an ultimatum to Germany" was a burning topic. But the actual nondescript parliament at Westminster was quite incapable of interfering with the Foreign Office. It had neither the time, the capacity, nor the disposition to deal with foreign affairs. When the war came it was newspaper pressure that forced it to shove the war through by sacrificing its sluggish thoughtless routine to the supreme need for winning. Its front bench delegates to the Peace Conference have been thus roused to an alarmed consciousness of world politics; but no pressure of blood and iron can enable men to improvise world policy, which is a matter, not of rough and ready resourcefulness and hustling energy, but of experience, training, and a certain order of mind quite different from that which finds its natural employment in domestic politics. Therefore, whatever Mr Wilson, whose mind is of this comprehensive order, may be able to do, our own parliamentarians will still be at the mercy of the old diplomats, who

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

are at least accustomed to "think in continents" and not in parliamentary constituencies.

The remedy is to have domestic parliaments in the three nations (four, if the Welsh insist) for domestic affairs, and a federal parliament for their world politics. We should not then have ministers hastening to the Conference with a vague idea that Vladivostock is a suburb of Moscow; that Savoy overlooks the Thames Embankment; that it is unpatriotic to doubt that a Crown Prince who is at war with England varies that activity by picking pockets; and that war should be conducted in the spirit in which suburban neighbors, when they quarrel about a dead cat, throw its body backwards and forwards over the garden wall as long as it lasts under such usage. Division of labor and specialization of interest according to capacity are just as necessary in representative government as in executive government, unless indeed it is assumed that the ignoramus is the only really representative man. But the result of acting on that assumption is that the representative is hopelessly at the mercy of the official in all matters which lie outside the commonest experience. Foreign policy is clearly such a matter; and unless the lives of millions of men are again to be staked without their knowledge and consent by practically irresponsible diplomatists, we must have one set of representatives to deal with the Aldgate Pump and another to deal with the Danube. Our present parliament palpitates between the Aldgate Pump and Ireland, and is composed mostly of men who, though able to tackle problems of local and national government with at least some possibility of eventually mastering them, know rather less about foreign affairs and history than about quaternions. We must sort out our political work better. Give England Home Rule by providing an English parliament for English affairs, with similar appropriate spheres for municipal and national ability in Scotland and Ireland, and a central federal parliament will emerge as the organ of high politics, and take over the European command from the Foreign Office and the War Office. Indeed without such an organ, and the parliamentary responsibility it would establish, we shall be forced to send ir-

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

responsible diplomatists to the League of Nations, and thereby weaken the democratic character and authority of that super-national body by making it possible for the federated republics to complain that the British delegates are nationalist advocates and party henchmen in disguise.

It is therefore even luckier for England than for Ireland that Mr Wilson must be, for the purpose of the Peace Conference, a republican federalist as against the reactionists to monarchy and centralization. If he could secure federal government for Germany, Austria, Russia, Slavia, and the British Islands, it would be established as the rule for Europe instead of, as it was before the war, the exception; and the United States would immediately succeed to the political seniority of the world. The American President would be the *doyen* among the heads of States, the Charlemagne, the Holy Roman Emperor, the Apostolic Majesty, in place of the Hapsburgs abolished. Let no one think that this change has no value. It seems only yesterday that the late Lord Salisbury, who gave Heligoland to the Kaiser, refused to send a British official representative to a Paris Exhibition on the ground that a respectable kingdom could have no avoidable relations with that transitory eruption of riff-raff called a republic. Even so sound and recent a republican as Mark Twain thought that the United States ambassadors in Europe would look better in court liveries. Today a United States President has had his health proposed in Buckingham Palace by the King of England as between king and archking.

A century ago Wellington stood where Mr Wilson now stands, with courtiers and diplomats twittering nervously about him, the great man of a great hour. But Wellington, Irish to the backbone, stood for the old order, despising the kings, but hating the mobs. He won Waterloo, but could not make English Byron feel otherwise than "damned sorry." Mr Wilson, even more conspicuously the great man of a greater hour, and so far quite equal to the occasion, is Grand Master at the completion of that edifice of federal republicanism of which his countrymen laid the first stone in 1776.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Anyone who has fully grasped the situation of the European Powers, and mastered the history of the war, a liberty which none of the belligerents could permit even to themselves in private before the armistice, but which is now not only open to us all, but highly desirable, will be staggered by a second reading of Mr Wilson's speech of the 8th January 1918 (the fourteen points) and his elucidation of it on the 27th September. When these speeches were delivered, they passed for an arraignment of the Central Empires, and a demand upon them for securities for their good behavior. Today they have scarcely any meaning except as against Mr Wilson's own allies. One can almost hear Mr Balfour, Lord Grey, and Lord Robert Cecil, M. Pichon, M. Poincaré, and Baron Sonnino, saying "I trust you dont mean us," and Mr Wilson replying, with his jaw set in the halo of his famous smile, "You are too modest, gentlemen. I do mean you, and, the Central Empires being now disposed of, nobody else."

It may prove that at this point the fat is in the fire. That French diplomats and English country gentlemen of £30,000 a year are to allow themselves to be schoolmastered by an American professor is a phenomenon which to them will appear nothing short of apocalyptic; and some of them have given anguished expression to this feeling in private. But the President's extraordinary personal success in London has put an end to such snobbish recalcitrance in England. Today the part of Charlemagne is to him who can play it: the tiara to him who can pontificate. After the banquet at Buckingham Palace and the reception at the Guildhall, no doubt remained as to who was king, by divine right of character and personality, in western Europe. But even whilst Mr Wilson was speaking at the Guildhall, the votes cast at the General Election a fortnight before were being counted; and next day the count revealed an overwhelming majority in Parliament for the party against which Mr Wilson will have to fight tooth and nail in the Peace Conference if he is to carry his fourteen points. "I find in my welcome" said the President at the Guildhall "the thought that they [the Allied nations] have fought to do away with the old order and establish a new one, and that

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

the key of the old order was that unstable thing which we used to call the balance of power, a thing which was determined by the sword which was thrown in on the one side or the other, a balance which was maintained by jealous watchfulness and an antagonism of interests which, though it was generally latent, was always deepseated." Unfortunately, the old order was just then receiving a five years lease of parliamentary supremacy from that proportion (about half) of the registered electors of the United Kingdom which took the trouble to vote. As far as it can be said to have voted for anything definite, it voted for hanging the Kaiser; and the degree of its political sagacity may be inferred from the fact that in order to secure that satisfaction it put into power the party which will certainly do its best to restore monarchy in Germany, and which is in sympathy with Mr Wilson's opponents in the United States to such an extent that the first practical instalment of the League of Nations threatens to be a combination of the British Government and the American Opposition against the American Government and the British Opposition. All of which confirms the view that Mr Wilson will not be helped by party politics. He must make his way as the Man of Destiny, depending for his support on the hopes and fears of mankind, and on the urge of evolution which inspires them, waving the mere votes aside as an old hand who knows what votes are worth.

The crux of the fourteen points is the League of Nations; and what we have to consider now is what this League must come to in practice. At the Guildhall Mr Wilson described it as "not one group of nations set against another, but a single, overwhelming, powerful group of nations which shall be the trustee of the peace of the world." At which there was immense cheering.

It will be observed that in this definition the group is only a group. "The parliament of man, the federation of the world" is still out of the question; and Anacharsis Klootz, Orator of the Human Race, is still a fool and a *farceur*. This is quite as it must be. For I am sorry to say that Anacharsis Klootz, being guillotined, yet speaketh, and is indeed all over the place, especially in

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

the United States, which issues from the press, every week or so, the latest crankbuilt scheme for assembling all the nations of the earth, black and white, brown and yellow, pagan and Christian, savage and civilized, as big as the United States or as little as the Republic of San Salvador, not to mention Monaco or Andorra, at The Hague, to fall on one another's necks and do something which is vaguely described as arbitrating, with a view to the immediate establishment of the millennium.

Now if this sort of folly were confined to the American crank, it would not matter. I know the American crank well: he never stops writing to me under the impression that I am the world's Supercrank. But the British official League of Nations diplomatist is Lord Robert Cecil; and he has solemnly declared that unless all the nations of the earth are included, there can be no League of Nations. Whereas the obvious truth is that the practicability and success of the League of Nations depend on limitation to a carefully selected group of politically and psychologically homogeneous constituents. As I write these lines the report comes that M. Leon Bourgeois is vehemently of this opinion from the French point of view. No autocracy is eligible for such a combination, because autocrats die, go mad, take to drink, can be bribed, and cannot possibly govern their countries except by delegating their power to hundreds of petty autocrats, in no real organic relation to one another, and all subject to the vicissitudes that threaten the chief autocrat. When an American President, who theoretically has no power to pledge his jealously democratic country at all, gives an undertaking that the United States will observe such and such covenants for the next twenty years, no one hesitates to stake all his capital on the certainty that the undertaking will be carried out. When some oriental Tsar, who has absolute power to pledge his country, gives a similar undertaking, it is not valid for five months or five minutes; consequently no one in his senses will stake ten pounds on its being carried out. Now the solidity of the League of Nations depends on the constituent nations being in a position to give pledges that command practically absolute confidence: in technical terms, having a

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

responsible Government. An autocracy cannot deliver the goods; and that settles the question of its eligibility for a League of Nations, and settles it emphatically in the negative. Even an alliance, as the breakdown of the Russian alliance has just proved, is not safe with an autocracy.

But there must be much more than mere pledges between the constituents of the League of Nations. They must form a supernational legislature, and set up a supernational tribunal, exactly as the United States had to set up a superstate legislature and a superstate tribunal. To put it in more intimate terms, they must have, for affairs wider than their national affairs, a common legislature and a common tribunal. Now people cannot have a common legislature and a common court of justice unless they have common ideas of right and wrong, law and justice. They must have a common language, however its dialects may vary from English to French, and from German to Swedish. They may have half a dozen different words for justice, or for wife, or for God, or for honor, or for humanity; but unless the different words mean pretty nearly the same thing, no common legislature or tribunal is possible. Attempts at common action between people who believe in fifty gods and make human sacrifices to them and people who believe in one god or in no god will not work. People to whom women are mere breeding cattle to be bought by the dozen if a man can afford so many will not get on with people to whom women are wives and mothers in the western sense. Nations on whose territory it is an offence punishable by torture and death for a laborer to criticize the Government can have nothing in common politically with nations in which every man has a vote, and may vituperate his rulers with tongue and pen to his heart's content. Nations which cannot intermarry without a strong sense of miscegenation will hardly arrive at laws or verdicts by the same process of reasoning.

The difficulty, then, in forming a League of Nations is not to get every nation into it, but to keep the incompatible nations out of it. Twelve years ago the most zealous claimant for admission to a League of Nations would have been the Tsar of Russia,

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

whose example would immediately have been followed by the Empress of China and possibly the Lama of Thibet. Their admission would have produced either complete paralysis of the League or else such a reduction to absurdity as occurred in the southern States of America after the Civil War, when the American crank was allowed to force heterogeneous white and black legislation and justice on the emancipated slave States.

The moment it is recognized that the League must be founded on a basis of common ideas, common institutions, common level of civilization, and, generally and roughly, a common philosophy of life, it becomes apparent, first, that the materials for a League of which the British Empire and the United States are to be constituents are to be found between the Carpathians and the Rocky Mountains, and not further afield. Its constituents must be either republics or constitutional monarchies in which the monarch has much less personal power than an American President would have if he were elected for life. It must have a well developed Labor movement, Socialist movement, and Science movement. And it would have to be prepared for the formation of other Leagues of Nations in the yellow world, the Indian world, perhaps in the Slav world and the Spanish-Indian world. Human political society is in solution; and it will not crystallize into one solid lump for a long time yet. The possibility of putting an end to war lies not in waiting for the one solid lump, but in the first League being so formidable, and, let us hope, so well intentioned, that no foreign leagues would dare attempt such a monstrous and perilous enterprise as a war on it would be.

With the ground of speculation thus cleared, we can see quite plainly where we must begin. Without a League between the United States, Great Britain, France, and Germany there can be no peace in the world, and consequently no League of Nations in the sense now contemplated. Anything short of this would be simply the present offensive and defensive alliance made permanent. By the acceptance of the fourteen points, and the acceptance of an armistice (virtually a surrender) on their basis, these four countries have consented to the League in principle. And it

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

is clear that when the League is once formed and believed to be genuine, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden will join it automatically. Whether Italy, Spain, and Greece would commit themselves at once, or consider the possibility of a separate League with South America, need not be too curiously considered; for they would certainly not hold aloof with any purpose of reviving the wars of religion against the new crystallization of the Protestant North. They would be friendly. Frankly, on the score of an undeniable heterogeneity of temperament, the combination might be more workable without them. The northern combination would be strong enough to begin with; and enough is enough. The danger of biting off more than we can chew is very obvious: superfluous strength would be dearly purchased at the cost of a great increase of friction.

We now see that the difference between Mr Wilson and M. Clemenceau, declared in the three days debate in the French Chamber which began on the 27th December, is not so irreconcilable as it seems. Mr Wilson said "If the future had nothing for us but a new attempt to keep the world at the right poise by a balance of power, the United States would take no interest, because she will join no combination of power which is not a combination of all of us." M. Clemenceau said "There is an old system, the balance of power, to which I remain faithful. This system seems to be now condemned; but if such a balance of power had preceded the war, and if Britain, America, France, and Italy had agreed to say that whoever attacked one of them would be attacking the whole world, this atrocious war would not have taken place. This system of alliance shall be my guiding thought at the Conference. I shall make all possible sacrifices to this end." Now as between the alliance thus desiderated by M. Clemenceau and a Klootzian League of the Human Race there is, fortunately, a hopeless incompatibility. But between it and the practical form which a League of Nations must take there is no incompatibility, because the League will be an alliance to maintain the balance of power in favor of peace as against war, and of democracy as against autocracy and oligarchy.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

I may add that the alliance under the old system proved unstable, and failed to prevent the war. M. Clemenceau said truly that "If Britain, America, France, and Italy had agreed to say that whoever attacked one of them would be attacking the whole world, this atrocious war would not have taken place." But this was just what not one of them could be persuaded to do at any price. I have already described how I urged that such a declaration should be made by Britain eighteen months before the war, and how, even eighteen hours before the war, with the powder actually catching fire, Lord Grey still could not be persuaded to declare that Britain would fight, even to maintain Belgian neutrality. M. Clemenceau cannot forget the memorable explosion of relief in the French Chamber when, after waiting until it was too late to prevent the war and baulk the British lion, Lord Grey at last sprang his ambush. Russia, treacherously governed, collapsed in ruins after precipitating the war by her mobilization. Italy prudently waited until her price went up to fighting point. America did not move until Northern France and Belgium were blasted tracts of ruin. This sort of alliance can hardly be what M. Clemenceau means when he says "There is an old system to which I remain faithful." He might as well say that he remains faithful to the ruins of Rheims and to what has been called (in France) the condemnation of a million Frenchmen to die that England may live.

We therefore need consider no further what the League of Nations will be. It cannot possibly be more than a League of Nations with common ends and common interests. What does remain to be considered is how far they will be able to agree to surrender their sovereign rights to their common organization.

I need not dwell on the question whether Germany shall be admitted into the League of Nations. If she be not, there will be no League, only an alliance against her in which France and Italy will be able to use England and America to annex German and Austrian territory. This is already so obvious that the Jingos of London and Washington, implacably anti-German as they impose upon themselves to be, will be the first to discover that without

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

Germany they will be at a heavy disadvantage in a League of Nations. What is more, they are already at the same disadvantage in the absence of a League; for the French and Italian Jingos have been acting as masters of the situation, and making no secret of their determination to annex parts of the Rhineland and the Austrian Tyrol (to say nothing of Jugo-Slavia) without regard to the irredentist movements which must follow such annexations. The British and American Jingos may have no objection to these annexations as such; but they will object very strongly to being committed to support them whether they object or not, and to receive no *quid-pro-quo* for their submission to the superior self-assertiveness of the Latin diplomats. They will call in Germany sooner or later to counterbalance the south.

Thus Germany is sure of her admission. But it may be delayed, not on the ground that she is permanently ineligible, but on the ground that she has no settled government. As we have seen, even the existence of a settled government would not make her eligible if that government were a restored Hohenzollernist divine right monarchy, or an irresponsible Vigilance Committee holding on by main force. But if a form of government emerges politically homogeneous with that of the League (and this is the most probable event), then there can be no question, if the League be an honest one, and very little question even if it be dominated by Jingo jealousies, that Germany must be a constituent, and, from the Anglo-American point of view, a very desirable constituent.

Nevertheless the Anglo-American Jingos, and still more immediately the Anglo-American doctrinaires, must reckon gently with the feeling in France which has already so nearly driven M. Clemenceau into a declaration of pure reaction towards the old diplomacy which, with all its drawbacks, has so signally avenged Sedan. It is easy to sit down behind the British fleet, or at the other side of the Atlantic, and ask the inhabitants of Picardy and Belgium to feel safe in a new moral world within range of Long Bertha, and within a few minutes flight of aeroplanes that drop earthquake bombs on sleeping cities. Even London, who, safe as

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

she seems comparatively, has for years past not dared to allow a clock to strike nor a light to shine from a window at night, nor heard the report of an anti-aircraft gun without a spasm of terror, knows better than that.

If the old reliance on superior physical force is to be given up, the demand for security, which will be more imperative than ever, will take the form of a demand for disarmament. Now not one of the Great Powers will consent to be genuinely disarmed. M. Clemenceau has said definitely that France will not consent to the disarmament even of England: she will insist on the retention of the British fleet. But he will find that the question is not to be disposed of so easily. The inhabitants of Picardy and Belgium, contemplating their levelled houses, gutted factories, hewn-down orchards, and crowded cemeteries, may say "A plague on your British fleet! What worse could have happened to us if there had not been a British ship on the seas? Did we not starve with the Germans? Have any towns or villages in Germany suffered as ours have suffered? Was it not this fleet-building business that began all the trouble? Who but ourselves have had to pay for it? And now you tell us that America is going to build a rival fleet and begin the mischief all over again!" Thus the very spectacle of devastation which urges M. Clemenceau to obduracy against Mr Wilson turns out on closer consideration to be an object-lesson in the need for co-operation with him.

This argument will cut no ice in England. If the British statesmen dared be candid they would say at once that no proposal for the reduction of the British fleet will be entertained for a moment, and that it will be useless to claim that Mr Wilson's fourth point: namely, "that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety," obliges England to reduce her fleet. Her domestic safety absolutely requires command of the seas. It is difficult to see how the United States can take exception to this attitude, since their patriots have hastened to announce that they, too, intend to build an Invincible Armada. Yet from the moment they lay down their first keel with that end in view the main business of every Secretary of State for War in England

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

must be to do unto that fleet as England has already done to Germany's, unless the old order on which M. Clemenceau pins his faith be superseded by a new one, as Mr Wilson demands.

Let us see how far the war itself has changed the problem of the armaments. It has certainly greatly lessened the value of disarmament as a security for peace by demonstrating that a land armament, including a conscript army millions strong, can be improvised virtually in no time, and that feats of transportation of soldiers across the sea which nobody believed possible a year ago are easy. No nation can be prevented from making and secreting models of the jigs, dies, and presses on which a rapid mechanical output of weapons depends. Further, the most dreaded armament is now the aircraft armament; and the commercial aeroplane, of which there will be hundreds of thousands, is potentially a bombing aeroplane.

Psychologically, it has been shewn that a complete preparation for war in time of peace, though every belligerent accuses the enemy of it, is impossible. Everyone knows that as in the midst of life we are in death, we should always be ready to meet it, with our wills made, our consciences clear, and our moral accounts balanced. We know equally well that in the midst of peace we are at war, and should always be ready for the firing of the first shot. But in the one case as in the other, we never are. As we have seen, the British forces were the best prepared in 1914; but the preparation did not go very far beyond the normal establishment, and was neither up to date nor adequate to the share we had to take in the land warfare. In all the belligerent countries the age limit for conscription had to be raised during the conflict; and the armies had to learn their business, the rule at first being insufficiency and inefficiency on all sides. The moral is that disarmed nations can put up quite as disastrous a fight as armed ones if they are determined to fight. If the will to fight continues, the means will always be forthcoming. And the less skilled and the less prepared the belligerents are, the more horrible will be the suffering and the carnage.

On the other hand, the use of high explosives, poison gas,

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

aircraft, and guns ranging up to seventy miles has made the possibilities of destruction and death so appalling, that the necessary precautions against them, even if effective, make life as intolerable for the civil population whom the armies formerly protected as for the soldiers themselves: indeed more so; for the soldier has nothing to do but deal and dodge death, whilst the civilians have to support the soldiers, support themselves, and take care of the children into the bargain under this terrible fire. The expense and demoralization are enormous. Formerly war was the sport of kings: an extravagance which they could afford and even profit by if successful. There were cases in which the losers themselves were the better for a war. But now the expense is past a joke. That the national outputs of the belligerents have never been better distributed than during the war; that millions of laborers and their families have been better fed and clothed than ever in their lives before; that nevertheless colossal profits have been made by some employers, does not console the governing class for the reduction of its permanent incomes by more than one third through income tax and supertax, for a fifty per cent reduction in the purchasing power of the two thirds that remain, and for the threat of "a levy on capital." This, though founded on the absurd delusion that the figures of the War Loans and Victory Loans and Liberty Loans are anything now but memoranda of claims for interest payable out of future production, may nevertheless have the effect of confiscating that interest, and forcing property holders to mortgage their estates and their industrial stocks and shares to the Government for nothing, as the Government will simply write off the amount of the mortgage against the "capital levy" which has compelled the victim to mortgage. Add nine million deaths from war pestilence, which is only faintly alleviated by calling it Spanish Influenza; pile on the uncertainty as to whether even the victors can avert the revolutions which are now practically *de rigueur* in the case of defeat; and it will be seen that Bloch, the Polish banker, whom the war was at first supposed to have signally refuted, has in fact been confirmed by it in his essential thesis that modern war has passed from the stage

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

of wholesale murder to that of State suicide.

Therefore a deadlock may be averted by the fact that the nations, though afraid to disarm, are still more afraid to face the next war, for which their armaments are intended. Disarmament will not prevent war, nor, if it could, would that sort of preventive have much moral value. The peace that is produced by disablement is worth no more than that which is produced by manacles and fetters. The disarmament of nations will follow the course of the disarmament of individuals. On the wild edges of civilization men carry revolvers and cartridges. When they come to New York or Paris or London, it is not necessary to disarm them: they sell their revolvers and buy umbrellas. Neither the British Empire nor the United States nor the French Republic nor the German Federation will beat their swords into ploughshares until they feel safe without them. When they do feel safe they will lose no time, because armaments are frightfully expensive; and compulsory military service is so irksome that it would be intolerable except under pressure of a mortal peril.

The abolition of conscription, which would be very popular, may, if skilfully advocated, be accepted as a compromise. Every government knows now that in the event of a war it can not only introduce conscription *ad hoc*, but can even, as happened in England, get so many voluntary recruits as to leave it an unsettled question whether conscription is ever really necessary. Now Mr Wilson can hardly ask much more on his fourth point than that conscription should be abolished? With the power of conscription up each nation's sleeve; with a professional army on hand sufficient for that very elastic consideration "domestic safety"; with a secret provision for the turning out of weapons in large quantities as fast as any other Power could; and with an industrial transport service in the air and on the roads capable of military service (conditions of which nothing can deprive any nation at present), a quite imposing show of disarmament may be made without any real sacrifice. In England any political reform, however revolutionary in appearance, will be accepted by the governing classes if only it can be codified in such a way as to leave

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

things virtually where they were before. Dickens's formula "How not to do it" remains as valid as ever. But it does not always work as it is intended to work. In this particular case it is clear that the pretence of abandoning warlike intentions would very considerably weaken them. It is the tragedy of the hypocrite that he is often held to his professions to such an extent that he has to confess to himself ruefully on his deathbed that he might just as well have been born an honest man.

Still, all this applies to land forces, and not to navies and their power of blockade. Here there will be no yielding. Mr Wilson might as well ask Britain to cut her right hand off as to forgo either her present navy or such increase of it as may be necessary to keep it ahead of any naval combination that could in any reasonable probability be brought against it. And Mr Daniels, Secretary to the United States navy, and as little of a fire-eater as any Quaker, has declared unequivocally, on the question being raised by the American admirals, that unless a League of Nations in some way supersedes this British necessity, the United States must build a bigger navy than the British. This, curiously enough, is the most satisfactory position from which the League of Nations could possibly start, because it practically guarantees another war, with Britain on one side, the United States on the other, and Japan heaven knows where, unless the League of Nations super-nationalizes the two fleets and prevents them from attempting to outgrow one another. The prospect of such a competition is unbearable; for the resources of the two countries are so huge that a race of armaments between them beggars imagination; and the final inevitable collision would be cataclysmal. Poor Germany, with all her goods in the shop window, working hard and long for scanty pay, could afford no preparation for the last war comparable for a moment to a British-American preparation for the next one. What is more, the Americans and English, being relatives, have a power of hating one another that no strangers could attain. Throughout the whole nineteenth century there was no bad blood between the Germans and the English: they were allies and friends. During the same period there was continual

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

bad blood between the Americans and the English: the closely related blood feud between England and Ireland was hardly less cordial; and the recent celebration of a century of brotherly peace and Hands Across the Atlantic was, even for a political farce, an exceptionally impudent one. The first battleship Mr Daniels builds in the absence of a League of Nations will begin an anti-American movement in England compared to which the anti-German one will seem a lovers' quarrel.

This abominable vision makes some arrangement imperative, League or no League. The two Powers must agree as to the weights of their respective naval armaments, solemnly forswearing all rivalry, and entering into such engagements as must put them unequivocally in the wrong morally if they blockade Europe without the sanction of the League, or if they attack one another. Less than this can hardly be tolerated in the face of recent experience; and more cannot be enforced; for if England and America agreed to throw over the League at any time, there would be an end to it. Nothing but conscience and common sense can keep it together in any case: no material guarantees could avail against a deliberate resolution of its more powerful constituents to revert to the present evil anarchy. We must make up our minds to this from the beginning. It is true that the League must have a police force at its disposal; but just as no State has or can have a domestic police force strong enough to restrain the whole mass of the people from doing anything they are determined to do, so no League of Nations can have a police force capable of preventing its constituents from relapsing into the barbarism of war if they are bent on it. Something can be done in restraint of accumulation of huge stocks of high explosives, shells, and artillery, by a League which will at least have the right to call attention and demand explanations. The fitting of commercial submarine craft with torpedo tubes can be made an offence against supernational law; and if the League of Nations insists on responsibility of the Press in foreign affairs (and to interfere with fleets and armies and leave newspapers alone would be to strain at the gnat and swallow the camel) it must acquire rights of

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

action, if not against the advocacy of war in the abstract by Darwin, Ruskin, Tennyson, and their German disciples, at least against Press campaigns and Bernhardian treatises hounding on any nation to a specific act of war. These steps will be difficult at first. But later on, when the widespread feeling that war is a crime against humanity finds at last an organized executive power behind it, it will become much easier to deal with war agitations as incitements to crime.

I purposely omit such widely advocated and little thought-out "sanctions" as the outlawry and economic boycott of a recalcitrant nation. They are double-edged weapons, or rather spears pointed at both ends. We do not outlaw the individual offender: we either leave him to his conscience or call a policeman. We cannot outlaw him without outlawing ourselves at the same time in respect of him. And we cannot refuse a customer without losing his custom. This holds good between nations also. The only effective sanctions are force and conscience.

There is one expedient, dear to the old diplomatists, which must be discarded by the League of Nations, and that is the figment of neutrality. Calling a country neutral is in effect pretending that for certain purposes it does not exist. The pretence does not alter the fact that it does exist. Before the war Belgium and Greece were diplomatically assumed to have no existence in relation to the war. They were called neutral: that is, neither one thing nor the other, giving no reaction either to the British litmus or the German turmeric. But the Germans found out at once in practice what they had known all along in theory, that their only chance of winning the war was to get to Paris with the utmost speed; and the shortest way was through Belgium, which was therefore by no means neutral, but either a bridge to victory or a very solid obstacle to it. They at once demanded a passage through Belgium, offering to pay their way and do no damage. The refusal of this offer became an act of war by Belgium on behalf of the Allies. But its acceptance would have been equally an act of war on behalf of Germany against the Allies. In such a situation the figment of neutrality collapsed at once. The dilemma

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

was so obvious that it had been foreseen and provided for, Belgium having, as we have seen, had already to arrange that in such an event she was to resist any attempt on the part of the German army to pass through her territory. The arrangement was not discovered and revealed until the Germans took Brussels; and in the meantime there was a reckless exploitation of virtuous indignation among the Allies over the violation of neutrality and the tearing up of the treaty of 1839 which guaranteed it, and which the Imperial Chancellor, like Gladstone forty years before, estimated accurately as a scrap of paper. Yet he was himself the dupe of the figment to such an extent that he very rashly admitted moral delinquency instead of thinking out his case. Neutrality had not been "violated": that which does not exist cannot be violated. A figment had been reduced to absurdity: that was all.

I made such attempts as an unofficial individual writer could to warn the country not to be righteous overmuch, as it was extremely unlikely that we should get through the war without having to violate neutrality ourselves. But in England nothing can resist the national love of lecturing other people on their moral behavior. The flimsiest case for moral superiority is preferred to the strongest case in which "honors are easy." We revelled and wallowed in our superiority to the tearers up of scraps of paper (our own waste-paper basket being none the less full) and to the violators of the sacred covenant of neutrality. We then discovered that it was necessary for the success of our Eastern strategy to seize certain Greek islands, and to send troops into Greek territory. Also (and this raises a point of the first importance for the League of Nations) we found that our production of steel depended on a certain natural product for which we had hitherto depended on Germany, and must now procure from Eubea. In dealing with this situation we shewed none of Bethmann Hollweg's squeamishness. We seized the islands, including Eubea, straight away, and then sounded the King of Greece as to whether he would not like to regularize the proceeding by coming into the war on the side of the Allies. His reply, made to an American interviewer, was that he declined to take the side of a

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Power which always sent 35,000 men on expeditions for which at least 200,000 were needed. This pleasantry cost him his throne. We republished the interview with the pleasantry left out; hoofed King Constantine out of his country; set up his son in his place; and proceeded to make ourselves thoroughly at home in Hellas. The Greeks, with the object lesson of Belgium before their eyes, knew better than to do more than protest on paper. The Germans had established a reign of terror for all resisters of invasion; and there were no great Powers behind Greece as there had been behind Belgium to compel her to resist.

These high-handed proceedings were quite inevitable. Moral recriminations about it are empty and idle. Greece might just as well have made war on us as refused us what we took: she had no more power to be neutral in any real sense than she had to melt into thin air and let the Mediterranean up to the Bulgarian frontier. But our action knocked the bottom out of all Mr Pecksniff's nonsense about scraps of paper and the sacredness of neutrality. And they force us now to drop these figments and to face the real question of the conflict between the rights of nations and the rights of humanity at large. What rights of way are the nations to have over one another's territory? If one nation may force another to share its supply of magnesite, may it not in turn be forced to share its own supply of coal?

Here we begin to see that the League of Nations is being forced on us not only by our fear of another Armageddon, but by the march of civilization, which has bestidden frontiers and made "sovereign rights" as obsolete as autocracy or the Roman father. Just as it is idle for England or Germany to try to stop one another's army by a notice board inscribed "Trespassers will be prosecuted: this land is strictly preserved," so it is equally silly to try to stop pacific penetration by the same means. A whole new range of questions must be faced and answered. Has England a right to refuse to allow a German to land in England, or Germany a right to refuse to let an Englishman cross the German frontier? May a handful of people inhabiting a corner of the huge Australian continent refuse to let a yellow man set foot on it, however over-

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

crowded his own country may be? Has a Chinaman any rights in California or an East Indian in Cape Colony? If individuals have such rights, have nations and armies got them? Fancy such problems being solved by people who are still in the act of crying "Here's a stranger: heave half a brick at him"!

These questions may not be finally settled, nor even asked, in Paris; but unless the members of the Conference are keenly aware that they are coming up for settlement, and coming up quickly, their provisions for the future will have very little value. The immediately important point is that any attempt to fall back on the old expedient of setting up buffer States between the great Powers and declaring them to be neutral must be put out of countenance by the mere irony of the facts of the war. If the discussion threatens to degenerate at any moment into recriminations about violated neutrality, the Conference will be promptly reminded that the Allies were as powerless to respect that figment as Germany was. And when small nations (Ireland, for example) demand such independence as Belgium or Greece enjoyed before the war, had they not better be asked bluntly how much that independence proved worth when war broke out between their gigantic neighbors, and whether their chance of liberty does not lie rather in interdependence than in a spurious independence? In short, there will be a great breakdown of national cant at the Conference, because the Conference is international, and national cant has no currency beyond the frontier.

Further than this I cannot carry the subject. The story of the Conference from day to day must be taken up by the journalists who will write within a few hours of the event. I can only give a statement of certain conditions, some of them obvious enough, but all of them involving considerations not at all obvious, which, being none the less real, will either govern the Conference's decisions, or, if ignored or defied, reduce them later on to absurdity. In doing this I have done my best to avoid conciseness, because, as people seldom digest pemmican successfully, conciseness in complicated matters is generally the reduction of a compound truth to a simple falsehood. Early in the war the German

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Government, wishing to stir up a rebellion against the French in Morocco and Algeria, circulated a document written in very choice Arabic to the effect that I am a great prophet, and that I once told an American senator that the violation of Belgian neutrality was an incident of the war and not the cause of it. I am quite unable to follow that operation of the German mind which led to the conclusion that any Moorish sheikh could be induced to rush to arms because some dog of an unbeliever had made a statement that was neither interesting nor even intelligible in Morocco to some other dog of an unbeliever; but the Germans formed that conclusion and spent money on it. Thereupon a distinguished literary colleague of mine, E. A. W. Mason, who had plunged into active service in the war, and was busy circumventing the Germans round the Mediterranean and thereabouts, came to me and asked me for "a concise and straightforward denial" of the implication that the great prophet Shaw was a pro-German. Having been among the Moors and spoken to sheikhs and marabouts myself, I had no difficulty in convincing Mason that conciseness is not a virtue in Barbary. Also, I am not the man to lose an opportunity of preaching at the utmost admissible length when I find myself installed as a great prophet. Mason and I were not men of letters for nothing. We combined the style of our Bible with that of Burton's Arabian Nights in a prophetic message, which will, I hope, find a permanent place in Arab literature as an additional surah of the Koran. It was, I assume, duly translated and circulated; anyhow the Moors lay low and did nothing. It had every quality except that of conciseness.

But if it be a mistake to be concise in opening a case, it is just as well to add a concise summing-up, and thus provide a convenient conspectus of the conclusions arrived at. Accordingly I recapitulate as follows.

1. As far as the planning of the war and the preparations for it are concerned the parties enter the Peace Conference on equal terms morally. All of them obeyed, more or less intelligently, the instinct of self-preservation, and were under the necessity of securing it by military force because there was no supernational

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

law in existence to take its place.

2. The war was decided by the naval blockade, which proved that the British Empire has militant powers of starvation and ruin at present possessed by no other State.

3. Though France, through M. Clemenceau, has expressed confidence in this state of things, the United States, through their admirals and Mr Daniels, have declared unequivocally that unless the situation be changed by the establishment of a League of Nations, the United States must build a fleet capable of coping with any existing naval armament.

4. As a similar resolution on the part of the German Empire was the first step towards the present war, this declaration may be taken as the first step towards the next war unless and until the League of Nations becomes an established fact.

5. The League of Nations must begin as a combination of States with settled responsible governments of the modern democratic type, and will differ from an alliance by having a joint legislature and tribunal for enacting and administering a body of international and supernational law. The present alliance presents so obvious a nucleus for such a League, that it must at once anticipate its attitude and accept most of its moral responsibilities.

6. As republican federations of the North American type will be eligible as constituents of the League of Nations without question, whereas monarchies will have to satisfy the League that their governments are really responsible, the League, without directly imposing any form of government, or denying to any nation its right of self-determination, must, by the mere fact of its existence and the conditions of admission to it, act as a high premium on federal republicanism and responsible government, and as a veto on autocracy.

7. Germany cannot be admitted to the League until she has a settled government of the type desiderated; but the League cannot seriously ensure peace in Europe until Germany is admitted.

8. Pending the admission of Germany to the League, the Alliance will be dominated by the initiative of France and Italy; and as this situation will lead to a *rapprochement* between the

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

English-speaking allies and Germany, it is important that the campaign of hatred against Germany, which has now served its turn, should be discontinued in England and America.

9. Disarmament (including nominal abolition of conscription) is possible as regards land forces, but delusive. Naval and aerial armaments must be balanced and morally controlled by the League of Nations. The production of high explosives and artillery on a threatening scale, and the equipment of submarine vessels with torpedo tubes, should be made an offence against supernational law; but the League cannot make war physically impossible and should not try to.

10. There is not, and there never can be, any such thing as neutrality in war or in peace. Belgium passive may affect the result more than Brazil active. The extent to which any nation can be permitted to limit the general human right of way or to monopolize any natural product is one of the most difficult and pressing subjects for the supernational legislation which the League of Nations will have to set up.

11. The influence of party politics and Balance of Power diplomacy on the Peace Conference may produce a reactionary combination of the present European war Governments with the American Republican Opposition against the American Democratic Government and the European Oppositions; and as, in view of the electoral weakness of the latter, Mr Wilson, as a Great Man standing for a Great Idea, must depend on sheer intellectual and moral superiority without regard to election figures, it is important that America should wake up to this situation, and not leave her President in the position of a prophet with less honor in his own country than in Europe, on which he has made a tremendous impression.

GOOD MANNERS IN WAR AND PEACE

We are so unaccustomed to be at war with our more civilized neighbors that most of us have no idea of how we should behave ourselves under such circumstances. Not only our simple citizens,

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

but our editors and statesmen, and even in a few instances our very soldiers, have been guilty of the most shocking solecisms. Instead of putting on our full dress clothes and standing on our very best behavior, we have been recklessly abusive and injurious. We have frantically denied every statement made by the enemy without stopping to consider whether it was true, and have thereby not only missed the advantage of many valuable admissions in our own favor, but put ourselves gratuitously in the wrong. We have passionately accepted and affirmed and reaffirmed as authentic news stories which on the face of them could not possibly have been true. Our suppressions, being sane and premeditated, have been worse than our raging affirmations. In short, we have behaved as naïvely as the children of a certain little country town in my neighborhood, who assembled at the railway station when the announcement was made that some prisoners of war were to be imported for work on the farms. When they were asked what they had come for, they replied "To spit at the Germans." And those who told them that this was naughty, and sent them home, were immediately accused by several quite fully grown persons of being "pro-Germans."

For indeed the worst of it was that we did all these things, not merely to the few unfortunate Germans who were within our reach, but to those of our own people who behaved punctiliously according to the creed of Christian chivalry, or even with common decency. It seems hardly credible now that the Headmaster of Eton was driven scurilously from his place for reminding us that our occupation of Gibraltar raised the same problem as the German control of the Kiel canal, or that the Archbishop of York would have been unfrocked, had such a proceeding been possible, for speaking of the Kaiser as one gentleman speaks of another whose hospitality he has accepted in happier days. I might strengthen my demonstration by citing cases in allied or enemy countries; but it is for them to confess their own sins, not for me to confess for them.

What, then, is the creed of Christian chivalry, and the code of manners founded on it?

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

First and above all, a soldier who kills his enemy for any personal reason whatever is guilty of murder. Whether the reason be simple hatred, or a desire to strip him of a better pair of boots, or to remove an heir who stands between him and a property, or a rival who has supplanted him in love, no excuse can be allowed on the score that the dead man was an enemy in the military sense. A soldier slaying an enemy for a personal reason, a judge summing up against a prisoner for a personal reason, a clergyman refusing the sacrament to a parishioner for a personal reason, all incur the same condemnation. Were it not so, a soldier who had disabled his enemy or taken him prisoner would kill him. But his obligation to kill or disable him in fair fight is not more sacred than his obligation to bind up his wounds, nurse him, doctor him, feed him, lodge him and clothe him, when he is at his conqueror's mercy. That is the difference, and the whole difference, between the civilized soldier and the North American Indian brave, or any lawless brigand or pirate.

The moral law in the matter is the same as the physical law: the civilian's obligation the same as the warrior's. War is a very dreadful thing at its best; but if it suspended every rule and impulse of human kindness, so that men were not only authorized but enjoined to become utter devils "for the duration," both at home and in the field, human society would be incompatible with war as an institution, and Dr Johnson's famous definition of patriotism as the last refuge of a scoundrel would become generally valid. Too many of our civilians need to have this lesson rubbed into them by our soldiers. They know that in breaches of the peace they must not kick a man when he is down, or refuse to shake hands with him when they have fought out a quarrel with him. But they seem to have no shame in kicking a German when he is down, or declaring that they will never shake hands with a German as long as they live.

Now a good deal of this is due to a quite amiable failure to realize what war means. In the newspapers the civilian reads an endless and glorious list of heroic exploits by plucky, good-natured, indomitably cheerful British soldiers, whose worst weak-

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

nesses are a little comic coarseness of language and a tendency to go on the spree occasionally and sing parodies of popular hymns. And side by side with these lists are others of mean, filthy, cruel, cowardly outrages by men of several different enemy nationalities generalized as Huns. It does not occur to some of us that the German papers must have presented the same contrast between the British Hun and the German hero. Both are as false to the facts as the elaborate deception by which Sir Douglas Haig persuaded the German commanders that he was planning an attack many miles distant from the spot in which his final blow was actually delivered. His business of deceiving the enemy was a trifle compared to the business of deceiving our own simpleton-civilians, who know nothing of war and less of Christian chivalry. Even soldiers have to be deceived, because they are not all heroes. The percentage who win (or deserve) Victoria Crosses is balanced at the other end by a percentage who have to be restrained from surrendering too easily by persuading them that the enemy inflicts unbearable tortures and privations on prisoners of war.

But if these deceptions are necessary as *ruses de guerre* there is no sort of sense in keeping them up when the war is over. Sir Douglas Haig is not now ostentatiously equipping a yacht for a polar expedition to persuade the Germans that he will not be available for the defence of Amiens next summer. No British infantryman, however "fed up" with fighting, is now under the smallest temptation to surrender in order to escape from shell barrages. All the deceptions are now doing unmitigated mischief, making unreason and bad blood where reason and good nature are the most urgent needs of the situation in Europe. Everyone who is not a born fool must realize soon what all the clever people realized long ago, that the moral cleaning-up after the war is far more important than the material restorations. The towns that have been knocked down mostly needed it very badly, and will be replaced, let us hope, by better planned, healthier, happier habitations. We shall be able to build cathedrals quite as handsome as the best medieval ones, stained glass and all, as soon as we really like them and want them. But the poisoning of the human soul

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

by hatred, the darkening of the human mind by lies, and the hardening of the human heart by slaughter and destruction and starvation, are evils that spread and fester long after the guns have stopped. Yet the importance that war gives to fools who are negligible in peace makes them loth to let the war cease if they can possibly carry it on by mere rancor after the soldiers have come home. To appease such rancor, I offer the following figures.

First, as to the satisfaction we have already had of our desire to be revenged on the Germans for what they have done to us. Without counting the war carnage, which has been frightful, we have by our blockade caused 763,000 persons to die in Germany of "malnutrition," a polite name for starvation. By 1917 we had increased the civilian mortality by 32 per cent above the figure for 1913. Next year we got that appalling figure up to 37 per cent. This does not include influenza cases. More than 50,000 children under fifteen died in 1917, and 15,000 girls and women under thirty. These are only the deaths: the condition of the survivors may be imagined. And this is still going on more or less, and will go on until the blockade is raised. Does any Englishman want any more revenge? Can Mr Havelock Wilson find even a five-times-torpedoed sailor, or his widow, whose resentment will not melt into pity and horror at so dreadful a holocaust? How infinitesimally little and mean do our petty persecutions by internment and expatriation seem beside this awful blow which we have struck at the life of the very heart of our Europe, the common mother of the slayers and the slain! The submarine campaign was a desperate attempt to return the blow. It failed; but what right have we, whose blow got home, to give ourselves moral airs and demand the further punishment of the losers in this hideous starvation match? Even we, the winners, are already heavily punished for what we have done, not only by our own losses but by the German losses as well; for every German we have killed, and every German child we have lamed for life by rickets, is a loss to us just as certainly as every Allied soldier or civilian the Germans have killed is a loss to Germany. "There is no wealth but life" said Ruskin truly; and we shall all, Germans and Allies

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

alike, be on short commons for years to come, because we have killed and disabled so much of the life of the world. This is why Germany nursed back to health so many Allied soldiers whom they had broken with their shells, and why we did the same with so many German soldiers. This is why, at Ruhleben, the Germans gave the English prisoners with scrupulous honesty the parcels of food we sent out to them, though they were so hungry themselves that the prisoners at last became masters of the camp because they had a store of fats to give away. The poor little cramped minds that cannot understand this would have robbed the prisoners and left the fallen soldiers to perish on the field, or slaughtered them out of hand.

I have also a few figures for the consideration of those who have had dust thrown in their eyes until they see red by the atrocity-mongering which was not a very clean trade even in war time, and is now mere villainous mischief-making. Of course there have been atrocities. It is physically impossible that half or quarter of the crimes that must have been perpetrated by the bad characters engaged in this war should have been recorded. Accept all the newspaper stories as true, even those which bear their falsehood on the face of them: multiply them by ten; and they will fall short of the estimate of military crime which any statistician can give with absolute certainty without consulting a provo-marshall or reading a single sensational column about German Brutalities. Before the war one in every fifty of our population was charged every year with a non-indictable offence. One in every eight hundred was charged with an indictable offence. One in three thousand and seventy-seven was tried for a crime. The first two figures represent a good deal of violent disorder, including the knocking about of women in a highly unchivalrous manner. The last includes acts of cruelty so horrible that they are too sickening to be reported, some of the victims being the criminal's own infant children. In the face of these figures, and of the prisons and police forces and assizes and gallows that stand before us to remind us that they correspond to facts, it is idle to hold up an ideal Englishman who is incapable of

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

an act of brutality or cowardice side by side with an ideal German who is capable of nothing else. The plain fact is that both the Allies and the Germans must have conscribed for military service not only millions of average decent men, but thousands of infernal scoundrels. What these scoundrels did when they got such chances as war offered them cannot now be remedied, and had best be forgotten. Such memories are not useful even as an argument for abolishing war; for born villains are even more villainous in peace, when they are not under stern military discipline. The German military police could tell of things done by German soldiers that leave the imagination of our most inventive reporters beggared; but does anyone suppose that the French or British or Italian military police can present their tribunals with much whiter gloves? Only the other day it was reported as an ordinary item of news that the police force of the American army in France had to be reorganized because the French complained that in the department of the Seine alone thirty-four murders had been committed by the soldiers in addition to an unconscionable number of quarrels pushed to bloodshed. If this is what the less self-controlled members of respectable and civilized communities do to their friends and allies, what are they likely to do to their enemies when their blood is up? We had better wipe the slate and say no more about it: it is not wholesome reading for our children; and it will certainly not make the work of the Peace Conference any easier.

No more, I hope, need be said to check the cruder rancors of war. They are to be classed with rioting and looting as simple misconduct disguised as patriotism. I will not even press the case here against that intellectual rioting and looting, largely, I am sorry to say, conducted by university professors and men of letters who ought to know better, which is so much worse, because so much more lasting in its infection, than mere physical rioting and looting. Most of its authors are by this time ashamed of it; and their friends are no more likely to hold them to account for their ravings in the first access of war fever than for their utterances in the delirium of any other fever.

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

It will have been noticed by my readers that I have made out a much better case for the German war policy than any of the Germans have to my knowledge made out for themselves. In doing so I have acted only as a British military surgeon acts when he sets the broken leg of a German prisoner of war better than the German could set it for himself. The surgeon does the same for the English soldier; and I have done the same for the English case. I am of course aware that much more sentimental and popular versions of the English case are being offered in all directions; but the difficulty is that they are not true, and that if they were put forward at the Peace Conference the enemies of England could ride off under cover of a demonstration that they are not true. A capable advocate, when he is convinced of the soundness of his own case, always takes his opponent's case at its best, even if he has to state it for him better than he can state it himself; and he will take special care when going into court to cry off all claims that cannot be sustained, so as to avoid refutations that would prejudice those that can. In our case the claim that Belgium was in any real sense neutral or could possibly have been neutral cannot be sustained. The claim that the attack of Germany on France was entirely wanton and unprovoked cannot be sustained. The claim that the so-called strategic Encirclement of the Central Empires by an Anglo-Franco-Russian combination is a German invention cannot be sustained. What is more, if they could be sustained, England would cut a contemptible figure as a thriftless, helpless, blind, silly gull, victorious only by undeserved and extraordinary luck, and by the help of America at the last hour. Such a figure has sufficient points in common with the British sailor-lieutenant of melodrama to be more congenial and flattering to simpletons than the truth; but if England had been governed by its simpletons the Kaiser would at this moment be installed in Buckingham Palace, and the Prussian Guards would be knocking the hats off Englishmen who did not salute as they passed. Those who cannot bear the truth, or still hanker after melodrama, can find their fill in the papers that cater specially for them. They must not expect to find it at the Peace Conference. The *Salon*

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

de l'Horloge is not exactly the Palace of Truth; but neither is it the palace of popular patriotism; for as all the delegations have a different patria, and every patria has moral pretensions intolerable to and incompatible with the moral pretensions of all the other patrias, patriotism has to be dropped before any discussion is possible except discussion of the sort that is most effectively conducted with chair legs and revolvers.

It may now be asked whether under these circumstances I am justified, face to face with so many simpletons who are incapable of real politics, in letting the cat out of the bag. Why not leave the mass of men happy in their belief that the war was a melodrama of which they were the heroes, and leave the diplomatists to do the real business between themselves quietly?

It is quite a fair question; but there are several conclusive answers to it without falling back on the excuse that I am not very largely read by simpletons. I will give one or two of them. Even if it were of no importance that the British voter should know exactly what his Government has done (and that view is rank oligarchy), it is of enormous importance that the Germans, among whom I have many readers, should know, and know accurately, what has just happened to them, and that the rest of the world should know it too. We are the most powerful single State on earth now; but we still hold to the resolution we made when we were only a tight little (and by no means always a right little) island. We will endure oppressions and masteries from one another; but we will suffer no other State on earth to master us, or to have the means of mastering us. If any State begins to build up an armament with that in view, or even with that as a possible result, that State will have to fight us; and in such fights we have not been beaten since 1066. This success is due neither to luck nor to superhuman virtues inherent in the English people, but to the fact that as our interest in preventing a hegemony is not peculiar to us, we are always able to form an alliance against the hegemonist. And we are rich enough to see our allies through with money as well as with reinforcements. If our turn to be defeated ever comes it will be because our own position will threaten the

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

world with a British hegemony, and will make it possible for America or some other Power to form and finance a combination against us as decisive as those we formed against Louis XIV, Napoleon, and the Kaiser.

The moral is that hegemonies are impossible, and attempts at them certain to end in armament races and finally in war. There was a time when this did not seem an objection. Even now the professional soldier, the pseudo-evolutionary biologist, and the war profiteer, quietly encouraged by those who are of Great Catherine's opinion that an insurgent proletariat can always be diverted by giving them "a little war to amuse them," have still a good word to say for war. But the rest, having had enough of it for one generation, are urging on the Peace Conference, as its first and last duty, the replacement of violence by law between nations. That is why all the masks must come off, all the hypocrisies be dropped, and all the hidden cards be shaken from the diplomatic sleeves and thrown face upwards on the table.

When Imperial hegemony is given up as impossible, class hegemony within the nations remains to be dealt with. Civil war, the war for an idea, the only really respectable sort of war, will still be a possibility; and, ideas having no respect for frontiers, such civil war must develop into a world crusade. The melodramatic pretences of the Balance of Power wars have trained men and women to think of liberty and justice as things to be secured by fighting. That is a dangerous training. Much of the reasoning that I have heard applied of late to "the Hun" might be applied rather more cogently to me as "the Capitalist." Every second street in Europe now contains men who have found out how easy it is to get rid of an opponent by thrusting a bayonet through him or throwing a bomb at him, and are well practised in both operations. To glorify such methods when the practitioners were in the trenches, wholly preoccupied with the Germans, was common prudence: to do so now when they are face-to-face with the hegemonists of their own country is rash madness. We had better muzzle the trumpet and raise the hymn of peace, even though its loveliest and noblest settings, in *The Messiah*, in

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

The Magic Flute, in the Ninth Symphony, in Parsifal, are all the work of those notorious Huns, Händel, Mozart, Beethoven, and Wagner. The old lion is triumphant on the crest of the mountain. But the crest of the mountain is also the brink of the abyss.

This utterance of mine had about as much effect on the proceedings at Versailles as the buzzing of a London fly has on the meditations of a whale in Baffin's Bay. Woodrow Wilson, instead of morally stonewalling the victorious Chauvinists, Imperialists, and simple plundering camp followers who derided him as "a tin Jesus," suddenly went war mad and talked about war guilt and German criminality like any suburban Jingo. This catastrophe (for it was nothing less) was pathological: he was presently proclaimed an invalid, and died without retrieving his meteoric reputation. Had some opportune assassin shot him as Lincoln was shot whilst the Fourteen Points were still Europe's Magna Charta, his fame would today be as great as Lincoln's. But the strain of the peace broke him; and the hardbeaten old Radical duellist Clemenceau, the most obsolete but also the most energetic dug-out the war had produced, soon had the Fourteen Points in the waste-paper basket. The military had it all their own way as to the new frontiers: that is to say, ethnography was ignored and the foundations of a series of wars of liberation carefully laid by substituting lines of battle for neighborly doorsteps of the Canadian sort. An occupation of German territory by British and French troops was arranged: the idea being that Germany would not pay her ransom unless "men in possession" were put in. They stayed there for twelve years, with the net result that a great deal of British and French money was spent by British and French soldiers in German shops before they cleared out with the debt still unpaid. In short, the soldiers had it all their own way; and as their view of the destiny of civilization was exactly the same as their view of the Channel Tunnel, they produced a state of belligerent tension and competitive armament compared to which the

PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS

status quo ante bellum was a Quakers' festival. Let us not blame them for this: it was their business as professional soldiers. But for the civilian ministers who allowed themselves to be frightened into accepting a military dictatorship, and met every protest by the plea "The Colonel says it is necessary; and we shall all be murdered in our beds if we dont do what he tells us" I have no words. The reader must supply them from his own vocabulary.

CHAPTER XIII

POST-WAR CONTROVERSY

THE extent to which the war had frightened us was shewn by the fact that the controversies it raised were much more furious after the Armistice than during the firing. The treaty of Versailles, which was perhaps the greatest disaster of the war for all the belligerents, and indeed for civilization in general, left nothing to be done in foreign affairs but face the question of the next war pending the consolidation of the League of Nations. The French Republic, led by Marshal Foch, demanded Security. That most accursed word sounded to me like the maroons that used to announce the air raids. When Mr Lloyd George echoed the Marshal I could contain myself no longer; and the following explosion was the result.

THE COMING WAR WITH AMERICA

(From The Daily News of the 23rd June 1921)

Mr Lloyd George has declared war on America. The declaration, as reported in your columns, runs as follows:

“We are ready to discuss with American statesmen any proposal for the limitation of armaments which they may wish to set out, and we can undertake that no such overtures will find a lack of willingness on our part to meet them.”

“In the meantime we cannot forget that the very life of the United Kingdom, as also of Australia and New Zealand—indeed, the whole Empire—has been built upon sea power, and that sea power is necessarily the basis of the whole Empire’s existence. We have, therefore, to look to the measures which our security requires. We aim at nothing more: we cannot possibly be content with less.”

This is conclusive. There can be no security for the British Empire until the American fleet has followed the German fleet to the bottom of the sea. The Japanese fleet will no doubt be happy

POST-WAR CONTROVERSY

to assist in the operation; but as there can be no security for Australia whilst the Japanese fleet exists, it, too, must perish subsequently.

Thus, our Western program, beginning with Ireland (described by Mr Churchill as "a frightful danger to the British Empire"), includes two first-rate wars within the next twenty years.

But what about the Eastern program? It is clearly out of the question that France, now once more up to her eyes in military glory, should be allowed to maintain a formidable naval armament and a range of fortified harbors within gunshot of our shores (actually nearer than Ireland). How can we sleep in security under such circumstances? We must sink the French fleet, with Germany's assistance.

There is also the question of security at home. We have among us large numbers of disbanded soldiers, demoralized and inured to violence and destruction by the war. We have Sinn Feiners, Direct Actionists of the extreme Left, shell-shocked lunatics, and the usual percentage of criminals. Our lives are not secure under such circumstances. It is ridiculous to expect Scotland Yard to answer for our lives, when it can hardly place one policeman in every street.

To make the country secure it is necessary that every person shall be handcuffed, and not allowed to leave the house without a passport, and then only at hours strictly limited by curfew, on pain of being shot at sight. Are Englishmen to be asked to take the advice of a German philosopher and live dangerously? Mr Lloyd George says no: his every speech returns to the demand for security, SECURITY, SECURITY. That is the keynote of his policy, the cry with which he brings us all to heel.

I am not writing this to support his policy. I have done without security all my life; and I have never had less of it than when all the cowards in Europe were fighting for security. I know that security is impossible, and that nobody but a hopeless idiot or a person condemned to Parliament for the term of his natural life (much the same thing) could for one moment believe it to be possible, its first condition being that one Power shall exterminate

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

all the other Powers, and its final condition that one man in that Power (which one, by the way?) shall exterminate all his fellow-men, and thus enjoy the security of Robinson Crusoe until he slips on a piece of orange peel and breaks his leg, without having left anyone alive to set it. But unfortunately it is quite possible for any sufficiently silly Cabinet to try, and to be encouraged by the success of little laboratory experiments in Cork and Antrim.

John Bunyan warned us to tackle the hill Difficulty rather than have to choose between the paths of Danger and Destruction; but even John, deep as he was, never dreamed that parliamentary life could reduce men to such lunacy that they would choose Destruction because they were afraid of Danger. Give me Difficulty all the time, or even Danger all the time; but Destruction, no; not even when it is labelled SECURITY in Mr Lloyd George's best handwriting.

I hereby publicly warn all canvassers that I shall not vote for any candidate who is out for the security of the Empire or of anything else. After life's fitful fever I shall sleep well; but I do not need to have that extremely secure consummation unduly hurried by the new American poison gas or the torrents of shrapnel which our aircraft guns will fire at the moon to secure us against it.

This letter infuriated my old friend and fellow playwright, Henry Arthur Jones, who, innocent as a lamb in matters of foreign policy, and combining ardent depths of generous indignation with a most exhilarating talent for literary invective, had quarrelled with me vehemently during the war. At my suggestion of the possibility of a war with America his wrath boiled over; and he assailed me in *The Morning Post* in terms which may be gathered from my reply, as follows.

POST-WAR CONTROVERSY

MR BERNARD SHAW AS MISCHIEF MAKER

(*From The Morning Post of the 20th September 1921*)

My old friend, Mr Henry Arthur Jones, has done me the service of entitling me to a word in your columns in reply to the letter you have published from him on me as mischief maker. The cordial relations between myself and Mr Jones, which remain entirely unshaken on my side, have been strained of late by an unpardonable remark of mine. Shortly after the German fiasco (as I perceived it to be) at Liège at the outset of the war, when Mr Jones was torn by the spectacle of the British lamb struggling in the claws of the Prussian wolf, I told him bluntly that England was the most formidable fighting Power in the world, and that Germany had not a dog's chance. This was more than any romantic English patriot could stand; for it was tantamount to denying that England was the little sailor in the melodrama, desperately defending himself at fearful odds against a gigantic and murderous assailant. He told me that England was his mother, and that I had kicked her on her deathbed. Not sharing his anxiety about the survival of the patient, and having a lively recollection of the kickings she had endured at the boot of Mr Jones in a long string of comedies, from *Saints and Sinners* to *The Triumph of the Philistines*, I shewed no contrition; and since then Mr Jones has treated me as a diabolical criminal anarch.

Now I do not mind being called a diabolical criminal anarch by Mr Jones: he is welcome to decorate me with all the flowers of political invective he can lay his pen to without shaking my regard for him in the least. But when he assures the American nation "that under no conceivable circumstances could his countrymen be persuaded, or duped, or forced to load a single bullet against America," and that "it will take two thousand years to bring them into war with England," the affair changes its aspect. It is no longer a mere literary slanging match between two playwrights who ought to know better than to wash their entirely clean linen in public; it is an exhibition of the naïve sentimentality, the Arcadian innocence of history and diplomacy, in which an

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Englishman of conspicuous talent, eminent in a profession which has for its first qualification an insight to human nature, can be led up to the cannon's mouth in the full conviction that he is following the star of Bethlehem through a pastoral landscape to a general exchange of Christmas cards in a Temple of Peace and Goodwill to all men. And we know too well the hysterical madman he will become when the cannon goes off.

Let us look at the facts. Last June the Prime Minister, invited to discuss disarmament with the United States, delivered himself as follows: [see p. 356].

I immediately pointed out, with all the emphasis I was capable of, in a leading London daily paper, that this was in effect a declaration of war on America, to mature twenty years hence. This warning had precisely the same publicity in London and in America as the subsequent one which has so upset Mr Jones. But neither he nor anyone else took the slightest exception to it. It seemed the plainest commonsense here that England's benevolent disposition towards all nations must be conditional on their unquestioning acceptance of her possession of an irresistible power of unlimited blockade, search, seizure of cargo, detention in her own harbors of ships of all nations, belligerent or non-belligerent: in short, of lethal command of the sea. There is no secrecy about this claim: Mr Lloyd George keeps shouting it at America, at Ireland, at everyone who gives him an excuse for repeating it.

Presently I wrote again on the same point, but this time suggesting that it made Mr De Valera's demand for complete extrication from British diplomacy much more reasonable than it seemed. Instantly the sentimental patriots went stark raving mad. The editor of a widely-circulated weekly paper sends me a copy in which he has allowed a well-known journalist not only to differ with me politically, but irrelevantly to deny my virility, and frantically accuse me of wanting to condemn him to a life of celibacy, as if I had ever alluded to his gallantries, or had ever suspected their occurrence. And with him explodes Mr Henry Arthur Jones, less ridiculous, but not a whit saner. They both drop for a moment, and for a moment only, into something like

POST WAR CONTROVERSY

reasoning. The gentleman who imagines that he is Don Juan and that I am Holy Willie says, with a complacent sense of perfect tactfulness, that only my malice can imagine that a sixth rate naval Power like the United States would ever dare dream of rivalling Britain on the seas. This pouring of ink on the troubled Atlantic must be left to do its worst: nothing that I can say will disguise the attitude it betrays. But Mr Jones's solitary argument is worth a word or two. It is that America's refusal to come to our assistance for two years proved the depth of her attachment to the old folks at home. I do not follow the logic of this. Neither, on reflection, will Mr Jones. But I will tell him something he evidently does not know.

At the beginning of the war America and Italy, remaining neutral, carried on business as usual, including, among other things, their trade in copper. But copper sent from America to Italy was likely to find its way to Germany; and we were not taking any chances. When an American ship came through the Straits with copper in her we hoiked that copper out of her and dumped it on the quay in Gibraltar. America said that if we did not at least pay for the copper the distinction between our proceedings and simple piracy would not be apparent. We replied at first that we never had paid on such occasions, and never would. And thereby we came within measurable distance of bringing the United States into the war on the (from our point of view) wrong side. Fortunately, the Admiralty department in charge of the matter was itself in charge of a naval officer (his services have since been worthily acknowledged) who had more common sense than the politicians. His counsels were heeded; and the danger was averted, all the more easily as the German Navy was behaving in the same way. But, as the question was not permanently settled, President Wilson, elected (Mr Jones may have forgotten this) as the man who kept America out of the war, and enabled to plunge her into it against his mandate only by the attack of the German submarines on the American flag, included in his famous fourteen points the freedom of the seas. And it was his subsequent sacrifice of that point, more than any

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

other single circumstance, that broke his influence in his country.

The sequel was inevitable. The lethal command of the sea is not a Right: it has only to be nakedly stated to shew that it is a Might and nothing else. To defend herself against it America began building a fleet, just as Germany had done at the end of the last century. She is still building it; and we are building to keep ahead of her. Mr Jones may rail at me with all the licence of an old friend; but until he can rail one capital ship off the stocks here, or in America, he is wasting his ink. I repeat, we are heading straight for a war with America for the command of the seas; and nothing can avert it but a complete renunciation on all sides of that monstrous pretension, and with it of the cowardly dream of absolute security. We must learn to take our risks like other people, insuring them as far as possible, not by a competition in armaments, which increases them tenfold, but by making the country proof against blockade by making it self-supporting. The war proved that armaments can be improvised when we are frightened into setting about the work in earnest, and that only the improvised armaments are up to date. But it also proved that harvests cannot be improvised; and with all the combined fleets of Britain, France, America, and Japan co-operating on the seas in our defence, we came within six weeks of being starved into surrender by cheap submarine contraptions which Mr Ford could no doubt turn out at his factories as fast, bulk for bulk, as he now turns out his Tin Lizzies.

If people like myself who force these facts on the heedlessness of England are her malignant enemies, all I can say is that she is fortunate in having such enemies. She needs them all to save her from her friends.

In the following year (1922) I raised the very disquieting question of the employment of colored troops by European Powers. In the war, we had used Indian, and the French Senegalese regi-

POST-WAR CONTROVERSY

ments. There had been some indecent exultation over stories, true or false, of their exotic methods of homicide, and some apparently intentional disregard of enemy susceptibilities in billeting them; though I am bound to add that as far as my knowledge goes, black and brown soldiers are no worse behaved and often cleaner in their habits than white ones.

The following article speaks for itself.

BLACK SOLDIERS

(From The New Witness of the 23rd June 1922)

Mr Chesterton is mistaken in supposing that when I spoke of M. Poincaré's black army I was insulting the French soldier as one might insult a Coldstream Guard by calling him a black-guard. I was referring to one of the most serious questions now confronting Europe.

Some twenty years ago the late H. M. Stanley, explorer and enthusiastic amateur missionary, shewed me several samples of the letters he was receiving from his Baganda converts. They were like medieval letters: that is, the writers believed themselves to be under the continual and vigilant supervision of a heavenly father who was an active partner in every earthly transaction. They could hardly write a sentence without referring to him.

I was under no illusions as to the view such converts would take of the religious opinions of Mr Chesterton, or Dean Inge, or myself. I asked Stanley whether they could use a rifle. He replied with some indignation that they could handle it as well as I could, and were just as competent for military purposes as white men. A vision of a new Crusade to rescue Europe from the infidel rose before me. I have never forgotten it since, and have uttered a note of warning from time to time. As usual, it has not been taken seriously. That would be too much trouble.

The French Republic has fifteen millions of these potential soldiers under her hand. She is feeding them into Germany to be manufactured into actual soldiers. Some of them made a European sensation when they were quartered in the Goethe House in

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Frankfort. It does not seem at all impossible that they may some day be quartered in the Shakespear House in Stratford-on-Avon. The Germans are circulating tracts in English which may very easily horrify readers who do not know how white troops behave under similar conditions.

We cannot very well protest on military lines, because the figures are against us. It is true that the white native Frenchmen of whom Mr Chesterton is thinking are only forty millions out of a total population of one hundred and fourteen millions. But that is forty-five per cent white; and we white Britons are only eleven per cent of (roughly) three hundred and fifty million British subjects. We tried Indian troops in the war for all they were worth.

At the present moment the victorious Powers and, *a fortiori*, the defeated Powers, dare not call on their white citizens to go back to the trenches. But they can count on as many negro soldiers as they have drilled and equipped. The black soldier can turn the scale if he is thrown into the military balance of Europe; and it is France that is throwing him in. He is at present holding down Europe, and incidentally holding up civilization, for M. Poincaré. That is what I meant when I insisted on M. Poincaré's black army. In 1916, in my preface to *Androcles And The Lion*, I said practically everything that I have said here, at a time when the chances of Goethe's nursery cradling a company of Senegalese braves seemed infinitely remote.

Mr Chesterton is of course right in insisting that I do not believe in his dogma of the Infallibility of the Peasant-Soldier, though I know the qualities of that animal as well as he. The peasant acquires horse-sense from his continual conflict with Nature. The soldier has material realism knocked into him by his continued conflict with the ruthless physical force of the enemy or of the court-martial. The townsman, shielded from both these stern educators, follows a routine which he does not understand for his livelihood, and, unchecked by the hard facts of field and barrack, stuffs his mind with the chocolate cream of romantic illusion. He is too often a flabby dupe with whom neither soldier

POST-WAR CONTROVERSY

nor peasant can be expected to have any patience. The peasant simply ignores him. The soldier shoves him out of the way with the butt of his rifle, or with the other end of it.

But to conclude from this very simple phenomenon that the world can be ruled to any noble end by the wisdom of the peasant and the soldier is one of the townsman's dreams, and quite the most mischievous of them, if not the silliest. The peasant obstructs civilization; and the soldier wrecks it. The one is the main-stay of ignorance; the other of cowardice. Until both are abolished as we know them we shall get no farther, for they have led us to the brink of the abyss. The peasant must learn to work like a townsman, and the townsman to live like a peasant. The soldier must fraternize with his enemy, and, turning his weapons against Nature's pests and monsters, be decorated for killing, not twelve Germans or Frenchmen (possibly including a Goethe or a Molière, a Descartes or a Wagner), but a billion Colorado beetles. The three may then perhaps be allowed safely to meddle with public work, of which they are now absurdly and disastrously incapable.

Finally, I have no grudge against France. But I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that France's professedly republican foreign policy has been quite as mischievous as ours; and as to pretending that there is any greater difference between French and German human nature than between Surrey and Middlesex human nature, *je m'en fiche*, and I think Mr Chesterton ought to join me in that gesture.

This was no more successful than my previous attempts to draw attention to the danger I had foreseen when Stanley read me letters from evangelized negroes in which I heard the accent and spirit of Richard Coeur de Lion. But eight years later Lord Birkenhead issued a book of prophecies; and one of them was of Christianized Africa launching a crusade against agnostic Europe. Whether the moral is to make agnostics of the negroes or Primi-

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

tive Methodists of the whites has not been decided by either of us. I myself should prefer to see both whites and blacks taught some creed that would be credible both in scientific Europe and unsophisticated Africa; for I come to send, not a sword, but peace. But my readers can, of course, please themselves.

CHAPTER XIV

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

A DESPERATE attempt to check the new Race of Armaments took place in Washington in 1921. As what I wrote about it applies in all essentials to the London conference nine years later, and will serve for the next one equally, I place it on record here as a model for journalists to use on all such occasions.

THE LIMITATION CONFERENCE

I. WHY I SHALL NOT BE THERE

(*From The Nation of the 12th November 1921*)

"There are well-known conferences, party conferences, ecclesiastical conferences, and they have their uses; but no business is ever transacted at them—none. They encourage the faithful, they hearten the faint, and everybody goes home feeling he has taken part in the only show on earth. These conferences are essential to the life of any organization; but these are not the conferences where business is transacted." MR LLOYD GEORGE, HOUSE OF COMMONS, 31st October 1921.

I have been asked to attend the Limitation Conference as a professional journalist. So has Mr H. G. Wells. So has Mr Arnold Bennett. Mr Wells has consented. Mr Bennett will have consented, probably, by the time this appears in print. This is all to the good: both gentlemen are friends to America, and will represent England's brains instead of England's parties and classes. I should be proud to join them, though I am only a candid friend to both countries, and a native of neither. Nevertheless I shall not go. And as my reasons are of some public interest, I may be pardoned for saying what they are.

To begin with, though the Conference may stage one or two public meetings within earshot of the Press, nothing real will be done or told there. It may not even go so far: history records a

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

famous Congress in Vienna after Waterloo; but that Congress never met. No doubt Talleyrand, Castlereagh, Metternich and the rest did the business they went there to do. But on what back-stairs, in what and whose private rooms, between what groups or individuals it was done, nobody knows. In Washington the delegates who really matter will confer; but they will not confer in public; and of the results of their conference they will tell Mr Wells, just as they would tell me, either nothing at all or (more likely) so much in personal confidence that his mouth will be closed far more effectually than if he sat at home in Easton Glebe and deduced the operations of the Conference from his knowledge of history and human nature. I remember an occasion at the beginning of the war when I obtained in private conversation at my own table a piece of information which I could have made public very helpfully. For days I tried to learn it over again in some manner that could not be regarded as confidential. But I failed; and seven years elapsed before I could honorably treat it as public history. This incident is typical. English public men do not affect strength and silence. The strongest of them are the least silent: in fact, their indiscretion would astonish anyone who did not know that it is perfectly safe; for their world consists of people of importance who will not betray them, knowing that society would be impossible if private conversations were given away to the Press, and of people whose credit is not sufficient to support them against indignant official contradiction, nor, consequently, to justify responsible editors in publishing anything startling on their authority. Thus State secrets keep themselves even when an expansive and talkative popular statesman (and what man can become a popular statesman today unless he is expansive and talkative?) pours them into the ear of every man he meets between his Parliament and his club, and then becomes the life and soul of the afternoon tea party of his Egeria (every British statesman has half-a-dozen Egerias, though I understand they are an unknown institution in America) by retailing them there with every scandalous embellishment he can lay his tongue to.

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

There is only one place in England in which this reckless communicativeness is dangerous. It is the custom for the City of London to entertain Cabinet Ministers occasionally at great banquets in the Mansion House or Guildhall. The wine, which is of the best, goes to the heads of the guests; and though these heads, when of Cabinet rank, are usually well seasoned, and the Parliamentary habit of saying nothing at enormous length is intensified rather than corrected by alcohol, yet there is a real danger of indiscretion, especially as the speeches are assumed by all editors to have been meant for publication, and even to be official indications of policy. In the early years of this century a certain peer, who was then a commoner and in the Admiralty, electrified Europe by a cheerful postprandial assurance at the Lord Mayor's table that God was in his heaven and all was right with the world because the British Admiralty could always sink the German fleet before our declaration of war could reach Berlin. The convivial orator meant no harm: he was only making himself agreeable; but he created a panic on the Continent that raged for a fortnight. It was recalled by the Germans in 1915 to justify them in their attempts to conciliate American public opinion. But the British public never noticed the hubbub. We are sending that cheerful peer to Washington.

Now I will not go so far as to suggest that if the American public wishes to know what is happening at the Conference it should regale the assembled diplomatists at Gargantuan banquets and call on them for speeches at dessert. Such banquets would have to be quite wet; and America has gone dry. But I am sure that in no other way is there the smallest chance of inducing the diplomats to let America know what they have been arranging with one another.

There is another difficulty, and a subtler one. In England statesmen never need to keep the public in the dark because they take care to keep themselves in the dark. It may be that in America the Secretary to the Navy, when he orders half-a-dozen new battleships with 18-inch guns, says to himself, "Now I can sink the British fleet or the Japanese fleet if I want to." No British

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Secretary of State would be guilty of such indecent self-consciousness. Just as he might say to his wife "The Smiths next door have set up a third footman: we owe it to our position to do the same" he would say "America, a mere Republic, has set up five ships: we, as a first-class Empire, must set up six." And he would leave it at that. He would most indignantly repudiate any suggestion that those ships were meant to sink anyone else's ships, or that their guns were meant for anything but target practice. He would appeal to his gratitude for the help given by Japan during the war, to the hundred years peace between England and the United States, and to the Sermon on the Mount to clear him from the hateful imputation of having any thought in building a fleet except the protection of his country against unprovoked attacks from Powers less peaceful, honest, and harmless than his own beloved Empire. And in this he would be perfectly sincere. The Englishman is not a hypocrite: he always means what he says at the moment. Admiral Lord Beatty, the amateur Quaker of the public dinner table, is as honest as Beatty the hero of Jutland, sinking, burning, destroying. But it is emotion and not intellect that speaks; and the worst of emotion is that it has no sort of consistency. You cannot depend on it from one day to another. I have before me as I write an article on the Conference by a popular British journalist, Mr Robert Blatchford. He is under the influence of the pacific emotion roused in him by the hymns of peace which are being sung to welcome the delegates to Washington. "War" he declares "is criminal lunacy: it should be abolished: the Pacific problem can be settled peacefully if the United States and the British Government will rise to the occasion and stand firmly together in the cause of humanity." And again, "War is wicked and bestial and futile: it should not be allowed: it can be prevented: the first and most needful step towards its prevention is a solemn agreement between our Governments that they will forbid it." Excellent, you will say, adding perhaps that it is fortunate for the writer that he was not imprisoned during the war, as many men were for much milder remarks. But he ran no such risk. For this very same out-and-out

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

Pacifist was, from the firing of the first shot in 1914 until the present wave of pacific emotion got him, the most fervent fire-eater in England. And nothing is more certain in human nature than that if England and the United States came to blows this apostle of peace would instantly denounce all Americans as the seed of Satan; preach their extermination as the most sacred duty of all good men; and hound on the tribunals to deal mercilessly with every conscientious objector who ventured to hint at war being anything less than the noblest of human activities. And he would mean every word of it, just as he now means every word of the sentences I have quoted from his latest article. Whether America has any emotional journalists of that type is not for me to say: what I can say is that the British Press is overrun with them. Now that Washington is their theme, they are seething in the milk of human kindness, and backing up, for all they are worth, Mr Henry Arthur Jones's pledge that it would take two thousand years of mischief-making to induce any Englishman to shed the blood of an American. But let us not deceive ourselves. All that reckless and brainless emotional self-indulgence, amiable as it may be, does not justify the faintest presumption that the British and American fleets may not be trying to sink one another, with Henry Arthur and the rest frantically cheering their own side, within three weeks or less. It is not emotion in the raw, but emotion evolved and fixed as intellectual conviction, that will save the world from war.

In short, we shall learn nothing about this Conference from the Conference itself. Its business is now avowedly not disarmament, but the old task of arranging a balance of power that shall be satisfactory to all the parties. And as no arrangement will be satisfactory to any of the parties except an arrangement that it shall be stronger than all the rest, the Conference will find itself pursuing a Will-o'-the-Wisp. The delegates will begin sounding one another for alliances. They will make secret bargains and treaties in addition to the ones they already have in their pockets and pigeon-holes. They will be swayed hither and thither: one way by their fears of one another, and the other by their common

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

appetite for the exploitation of China and their hostility to Bolshevism. Japan will bid against America for British support. America, feeling hemmed in between Britain and Japan as Germany felt hemmed in between Russia and France, and perhaps remembering Sir Halford Mackinder's demonstration that she is, after all, only a rather perilously situated island between the two jaws of a mighty continent with a Japanese tooth in one jaw and a British tooth in the other, will be extremely uneasy, and will find herself wishing that there were a strong China (but not too strong) and a strong Germany (as strong as you like) to balance matters a bit. The more uneasy she feels the more determined she will be to equip herself puissant for battle in case of need. France, once more military cock-of-the-walk in Europe, will hold the balance of power between England and America; and M. Briand will play his ace accordingly.

But as war, in view of what Germany got by trying it, is so doubtful and desperate a resource, and none of the Powers can afford it just at present anyhow, there will be no shaking of mailed fists and clanking of shining armor. America will not dwell on the chances of another Jutland battle, another submarine campaign, another set of experiments with helium-inflated dirigibles and poison-gas bombs. She will reflect more and more attentively on the contrast between her own cohesiveness and the liability of the British Empire to fly to pieces, at the first breach made in it, like a Prince Rupert's Drop. California wants a white America; but so does Australia want a white Australian continent, and Canada a white North American continent. Lord Northcliffe, having made the discovery, so surprisingly to all British Islanders, that Australia is much larger than the Isle of Wight, and is, in effect, a whole quarter of the globe, has warned the Australians that Birth Control under the British flag is not enough, and that if the Australians do not populate Australia with white people it will be populated with yellow people. The point is not likely to be lost on Japan. Yet England cannot with any decency repudiate the Anglo-Japanese Alliance after what she has recently gained by it. She will have to ask Japan whether

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

the Mikado will have the condescension to be bought off for a sufficient slice of Asia.

Here are materials for some very animated conversations on the backstairs. But none of them will be fit for immediate publication. The peoples will find out all about it in time, when they cannot help themselves, just as we in England found out in 1914 what had been arranged in 1906. However, there are already so many cards on the table that a good deal may be said before the bargaining begins. I propose to say it in two further articles, in the first of which I shall deal with Disarmament, and in the last with the chances of getting rid of Balance of Power wars.

II. AFTER YOU, SIR

(*From The Nation of the 19th November 1921*)

"Disarmament is the only road to safety." MR LLOYD GEORGE
AT THE GUILDHALL, 9th November 1921.

Disarmament is such a popular cry when the Cease Fire has sounded and the moment of glory is succeeded by the presentation of the bill, that the United States Government, greatly to its credit, has asked the public to stop that nonsense and make up its mind to expect nothing more than a limitation of armaments. Yet I see in every newspaper the heading Disarmament Conference, and in all the editorial columns the old pieties about peace and goodwill and beating machine-guns into ploughshares and so forth. People find these pieties necessary to their souls. Before the war, when I met the disarmament agitation by saying "Don't disarm: treble your armament: you may need it presently" people said "There you go again, contradicting everyone! Standing on your head as usual." In November 1914, when in my Common Sense About the War, that intolerable document which afterwards turned out to be so exasperatingly right in every detail, I said "After this, nobody is going to disarm," the very people who were then clamoring very wisely for "Above all, more shells" looked sourly at me as who should say "Why cant you

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

hold your tongue?" Arming is one of the things you should do without saying anything about it; and if you ask a gentleman why he has a magazine rifle slung across his back and a Lewis gun under his arm, he feels bound to answer cheerfully "Oh, I thought I might put up a covey of partridges in Jones's field; and it's always well to be prepared." When Bismarck said that Balance of Power questions have to be settled, not by an interchange of Christmas texts, but by blood and iron, he was stating the simplest and most obvious of facts; but he made a very unpleasant impression, which the rest of us avoided by declaring that war with Germany was unthinkable. This was quite true: all wars are unthinkable; but they occur nevertheless. The moment they become thinkable, we shall begin to think about them; and then they will not occur. Therefore, the announcement that a war between the United States and the British Empire is unthinkable is so alarming that I am doing my best to rescue it from that dangerous category; for it certainly will not bear thinking about, though it will bear ten Washington Conferences quite easily.

The notion that disarmament can put a stop to war is contradicted by the nearest dog fight. The story of Cain and Abel has been questioned by many honest Bible smashers, but never on the ground that Cain had no armament. Nelson never saw an armor plate nor Napoleon a magazine rifle; but they got through a good deal of fighting without them. If Georges Carpentier were carrying a cane, and were attacked by a rash bystander, he would promptly throw away the cane and defend himself with his fists. It is the man who fights, not the weapon. Also the woman.

That elementary point being settled, we may now come to the question it suggests, which is, does disarmament then matter? If men are determined to fight, had they not better do it scientifically, with poison gas, than batter and tear one another to death like wild beasts? There is nothing so horrible to see as a fight between men who do not know how to fight; and this is as true of a war as of a street fight. Why should the Powers accept sentimental limitations at Washington anymore than at The Hague before the war? The introduction of poison gas in Flanders by the

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

Germans was not more slaughterous in effect, nor fiendish in its departure from the previous usages of civilized warfare, than the pitting of plebeian British bowmen on foot against charging knights and gentlemen on horseback at Poitiers and Crecy and Agincourt. Indeed the impression of an utterly ungentlemanly departure from the traditions of chivalry was far greater. The French, slain in incredible thousands by hundreds of mere yeomen, had at least the satisfaction of despising the English Kings as unspeakable cads whose spurs should have been torn from their heels by all the heralds of Christendom. But their protests made no difference. War was the sport of kings; but it was also business; and business is always business. In war you are out to kill and to avoid being killed; and it is idle to suppose that any method of doing either will not be exploited to the utmost. When you have made it possible to say of a huge country, as was said of Poland in the late war, that there is no child under seven years of age left alive in it, you are not likely to feel very sentimental about laying out a hardy soldier with mustard gas. There is not the slightest chance of any limitation of armaments in that sense being agreed to at Washington; and if it were, the covenant would be broken in the next war so entirely as a matter of course that the first combatant to tear it up would not dream of even apologizing. And so no more time need be wasted on that part of the problem.

In spite of all this, I do not see why the Conference should not agree to disarmament and limitation on a scale that will surprise and delight all the gentle and innocent souls in the world. Why, for instance, should not the United States, the British Empire, and Japan embrace Mr Hughes's proposal by agreeing to build no more battleships: nay, even to sink those they already have? That would be a magnificent gesture, and a most popular one. I shall not be at all surprised if it actually takes place. And the conclusion I shall draw is that battleships are as obsolete as Henry the Eighth's Royal Harry, and that the submarine and the battleplane are what the Admiralties will fight with in future. Further, what would war be without its whiskered Pandours and

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

its fierce hussars? Well, in spite of Lord Haig, the Powers may offer to abolish the fierce hussars. The reduction of all the cavalry establishments of the great Powers would seem a Sovereign Mercy. But the initiated would only wink, and whisper "The war-horse is obsolete: they are going in for tanks."

In truth, if the Powers have learned the lesson of the last war (they never do until it is hammered explosively into their unfortunate armies by the bitter experience of the next war) they may go a great deal further than advertising a parade of the scrapping of obsolete weapons as Christian disarmament. They may abolish conscription and reduce all their armies to the dimensions of the little British professional army of 1913 without running any real risk of defeat and subjugation. For the military lesson of 1914-18 was that armies can be improvised on any desired scale from the civil population at the first tap of the drum. And the psychological lesson was that no country ever really prepares for war in time of peace any more than any man ever prepares for death whilst he is in robust health. When France attacked Germany in 1870 the military authorities assured Napoleon III that his army was ready "to the last button on the soldier's gaiters." As it turned out, it was ready for nothing but the annihilation that presently befell it. When Germany attacked France in 1914, it had persuaded Europe as well as itself (and the tradition still lingers) that its military machine needed only a touch of the Kaiser's hand to start for Paris and arrive there in a fortnight with irresistible perfection of mechanism. If it had been so prepared, Germany would have won the war. What actually happened was that Germany lost ten days by attacking Liège with regiments at peace strength and no siege guns. Though the imagination of her enemies saw German spies everywhere, and her wonderfully organized intelligence department was the bogey of the alarmist Press, she knew so much less than, for example, I did, that she was held up for weeks before Antwerp by forces she could have swept away in ten minutes. And when at last her renowned Staff generals were induced to realize, to the extent of allowing poison gas to be used, that they were no

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

longer living in 1870, they were so unprepared to take advantage of the gap it made in our line that they advanced only about five miles. And yet the Germans are far more capable of military preparation than any other nation in the world, because, as the traditions of their more recent serfdom are still upon them, they are better organized and better disciplined.

The British, though they made as great a mess of the new tanks as the Germans did of the new gas, were apparently much better prepared; but even their preparation will not bear close scrutiny. Thanks to Lord Haldane, their expeditionary force, which was all they had bargained for by land, was transported to Belgium and delivered without a casualty, as promised seven years before. Mr Winston Churchill was able to shew that the Navy went into the war with five years' accumulation of munitions and stores. Lord French had for years been studying the terrain on which he was to fight; but the fruits of his study were not very striking: he retired in favor of a less carefully prepared general. And we now know, on the authority of our own naval commanders, that so many ships were unmanned and under repair for unseaworthiness in 1914 that if the German Fleet had dared to attack at once, we should have been Trafalgarized, just as the Germans could have got through at the first battle of Ypres "if they had only known."

Then consider the French. They can hardly plead that they were taken by surprise after agitating all Europe by their extension of military service to three years. Nobody who before the war passed any time in Toul and thereabouts, as I did, could doubt for a moment that the French army was being drilled on the assumption that war might come at any moment. But Joffre himself admitted, in the teeth of the patriotic French public, that the rout from Maubeuge to Compiègne before Von Kluck was disgraceful and inexcusable. It must have meant that there had been no real preparation, no plan, no brains. And yet these three Powers, in their mortal dread of one another, were each persuaded that the other had its war material up to date, its plan of conquest thought out to the final victorious march through the

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

its fierce hussars? Well, in spite of Lord Haig, the Powers may offer to abolish the fierce hussars. The reduction of all the cavalry establishments of the great Powers would seem a Sovereign Mercy. But the initiated would only wink, and whisper "The war-horse is obsolete: they are going in for tanks."

In truth, if the Powers have learned the lesson of the last war (they never do until it is hammered explosively into their unfortunate armies by the bitter experience of the next war) they may go a great deal further than advertising a parade of the scrapping of obsolete weapons as Christian disarmament. They may abolish conscription and reduce all their armies to the dimensions of the little British professional army of 1913 without running any real risk of defeat and subjugation. For the military lesson of 1914-18 was that armies can be improvised on any desired scale from the civil population at the first tap of the drum. And the psychological lesson was that no country ever really prepares for war in time of peace any more than any man ever prepares for death whilst he is in robust health. When France attacked Germany in 1870 the military authorities assured Napoleon III that his army was ready "to the last button on the soldier's gaiters." As it turned out, it was ready for nothing but the annihilation that presently befell it. When Germany attacked France in 1914, it had persuaded Europe as well as itself (and the tradition still lingers) that its military machine needed only a touch of the Kaiser's hand to start for Paris and arrive there in a fortnight with irresistible perfection of mechanism. If it had been so prepared, Germany would have won the war. What actually happened was that Germany lost ten days by attacking Liège with regiments at peace strength and no siege guns. Though the imagination of her enemies saw German spies everywhere, and her wonderfully organized intelligence department was the bogey of the alarmist Press, she knew so much less than, for example, I did, that she was held up for weeks before Antwerp by forces she could have swept away in ten minutes. And when at last her renowned Staff generals were induced to realize, to the extent of allowing poison gas to be used, that they were no

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

longer living in 1870, they were so unprepared to take advantage of the gap it made in our line that they advanced only about five miles. And yet the Germans are far more capable of military preparation than any other nation in the world, because, as the traditions of their more recent serfdom are still upon them, they are better organized and better disciplined.

The British, though they made as great a mess of the new tanks as the Germans did of the new gas, were apparently much better prepared; but even their preparation will not bear close scrutiny. Thanks to Lord Haldane, their expeditionary force, which was all they had bargained for by land, was transported to Belgium and delivered without a casualty, as promised seven years before. Mr Winston Churchill was able to shew that the Navy went into the war with five years' accumulation of munitions and stores. Lord French had for years been studying the terrain on which he was to fight; but the fruits of his study were not very striking: he retired in favor of a less carefully prepared general. And we now know, on the authority of our own naval commanders, that so many ships were unmanned and under repair for unseaworthiness in 1914 that if the German Fleet had dared to attack at once, we should have been Trafalgarized, just as the Germans could have got through at the first battle of Ypres "if they had only known."

Then consider the French. They can hardly plead that they were taken by surprise after agitating all Europe by their extension of military service to three years. Nobody who before the war passed any time in Toul and thereabouts, as I did, could doubt for a moment that the French army was being drilled on the assumption that war might come at any moment. But Joffre himself admitted, in the teeth of the patriotic French public, that the rout from Maubeuge to Compiègne before Von Kluck was disgraceful and inexcusable. It must have meant that there had been no real preparation, no plan, no brains. And yet these three Powers, in their mortal dread of one another, were each persuaded that the other had its war material up to date, its plan of conquest thought out to the final victorious march through the

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

streets of the enemy's capital, and its men ready for mobilization in overwhelming force, and at full war strength, for The Day. I do not exaggerate more than is necessary in dealing with the thickness of some of the heads into which I have to drive the truth when I say that if nobody in Europe had ever given ten minutes consideration to the strategy of the war before it began, there would not have been twopennorth of difference in the sequel.

The first precept that is dinned into a military student is that he must always act on the assumption that his enemy is fully prepared. If ever I take to the military life I shall proceed on the precisely opposite assumption; and, unless the opposing commander is equally intelligent and original, I shall sweep all before me like Cæsar and Alexander. I once asked a distinguished commander how far the strategy of the late war was ahead of the actual operations. He replied "Half a kilometre ahead of the front line." The public idolizes a general almost as wildly as it idolizes a detective; but the generals themselves know better. Every general believes that the war in which he commands will be exactly like the war in which he fought as a young company officer from thirty to fifty years before. In 1914 the British commanders believed that the war in Flanders would be like the South African war; and the German General Staff thought it would be like the Franco-Prussian War. The French generals, having been beaten last time, did not think at all, with very similar results. They were all sure that tanks were no use and that cavalry was indispensable. They all aimed at enveloping the other fellow, and at avoiding being enveloped by him. And nothing came of any of their anticipations. They drove their enemies headlong before them, and were presently driven headlong before their enemies. They very nearly won and very nearly lost over and over again; and they would have been fighting to this day if America and the blockade had not forced the Germans to capitulate immediately after they had all but driven our Fifth Army into the sea and frightened the British Government into declaring conscription in Ireland and madly tearing all the re-

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

maining ploughmen from their furrows, after which Lord Haig resumed the offensive as victoriously as if the British Army had never been at a loss for a moment.

What is the moral of all this? Simply that the disarmament items in the agenda of the Conference do not matter a scrap. If the Powers have any sense or any capacity for learning from experience, they will spare their taxpayers by disbanding their armies; countermanding their orders for battleships; and singing peace on earth and goodwill towards men at the top of their voices. Their submarines and airships will all be commercial ones: their explosive factories will be mere dye works: their gas plants will provide chemicals for ordinary industrial purposes: the working drawings of the latest magazine rifle will hide securely in a pigeon-hole. And the next war will be just as likely to occur and be much the same when it does occur as if all the Powers were visibly armed to the teeth. It will drag all the big Powers into it as the last war did. Nothing could have seemed fairer in 1914 than the Kaiser's demand for a square fight with Russia when the Tsar would not let Austria avenge the assassination at Sarajevo. But the other Powers believed that if they stood by and kept the ring for the Kaiser he would beat Russia and become too big for the Balance of Power. He was caught between their refusal to promise not to attack him in the rear and Russia's mobilization. In vain General von Bernhardi warned him not to give them a chance at him until he had both America and Turkey on his side. Events would not wait for that combination. He was at bay; and he dashed at the French section of the ring, and dragged all the rest into the fight: Britain, Japan, Italy, Turkey, Bulgaria, Roumania, finally the United States. Thus at bottom Germany was smashed because France and England were afraid of her; and now France is more afraid of her than ever; and England is afraid to let France give her the *coup de grâce*.

Unfortunately, now that the problem of the Balance of Power has proved insoluble in Europe, it has risen more pressingly than ever round the Pacific. Face that situation: face the fact that disarmament would be illusory even if the Powers could be induced

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

to disarm; and, unless you are a war profiteer, you will feel extremely gloomy, and will wonder whether in my next and final article I shall be able to point out any road along which we can flee from the wrath to come. But on all such roads it is possible to charge in the opposite direction; and I can promise nothing beyond another unheeded cry in the wilderness.

III. THE LIMITATION OF CHRIST

(*From The Nation of the 26th November 1921*)

"No country is more anxious for peace and disarmament than France. Unhappily, present conditions in Europe make it impossible for France to lay down her arms. France will do all she dares, but will do nothing imprudent. I fear Germany may return to a militarist policy." M. BRIAND, PRIME MINISTER OF FRANCE, AT THE THIRD PLENARY SESSION OF THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE, 21ST NOVEMBER 1921.

"When their minimum security requirements have been stated it becomes plain that the conferring States are to be not so much disarmed as stripped for action with a highly efficient, instead of an unwieldy and overwhelmingly expensive equipment. They do not so much propose to give up war as to bring it back by gentlemanly agreement within the restricted possibility of their austere bankruptcy." MR H. G. WELLS, WRITING FROM WASHINGTON TO THE DAILY MAIL, 18TH NOVEMBER 1921.

"The Army Council has now completed its arrangements for the disbandment of the four Cavalry regiments, 5th Royal Irish Lancers, 19th Royal Hussars (Queen Alexandra's Own), 20th Hussars, and 21st Lancers (Empress of India's)." ARTICLE HEADED 'DOOMED CAVALRY' IN THE MORNING POST, 24TH NOVEMBER 1921.

I told you so. Without taking the trouble to go to Washington, without stirring ten yards from a little village in Herts, without hedging my reputation as a prophet by a single ambiguity, I have foretold precisely Mr Wells's conclusion, Mr Balfour's conclusion, M. Briand's confession, and even the precise form

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

of bogus disarmament with which the preparations for the next war would be camouflaged. And with the incorrigible exception of Mr Blatchford, who innocently twists me with what he calls my rotten luck as a prophet, nobody has been humbugged. When Mr Lloyd George replied to President Harding's demand for a Conference by saying that Britain's policy was Security First, I said that security means war, and thereby threw my old friend Henry Arthur Jones into anti-Shavian convulsions. And now Mr Wells, face to face with the Conference, and head to head with the diplomatists, rubs my point in with all the power of his pen through a whole column of *The Daily Mail*, headed with that ghastly caption SECURITY.

I therefore strike from my proof some five hundred words or so which M. Briand, Mr Balfour, Admirals Baron Kato and Percy Scott, and Mr H. G. Wells have made superfluous. I claim no credit for my foresight. If I did, they would say to me in Ireland "You would guess eggs if you saw the shells." I pass on to a consideration of the war about which the Conference is making what Mr Wells calls accurately its Gentleman's Agreement. I mean, of course, the next war. I wish, as a civilian, to emphasize the fact that the personal risks of that war will be greater for civilians, including women and children, than for soldiers in the field.

The idea that civilians as such are exempt from the risks of war, and are inviolable as to their persons, lasted so long, and is still so inveterate, that I myself came up against it when the first Zeppelin raids in London occurred in the late war. I wrote a letter to *The Times* urging the authorities to provide bomb-proof shelters for the defenceless citizens, especially in the playgrounds of the elementary schools, so that the children might have a familiar refuge. I pointed out that the airplane and the dirigible had at last enabled military forces to overleap the defensive hedge of the army and make war on the civil population at first hand. To my amazement the editor of *The Times* indignantly refused to publish a communication countenancing the monstrous doctrine that civilians are not sacred, and that the

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

soldier who would raise his hand to a fellow creature in mufti, save in the way of kindness, is not unworthy the name of Briton. I could only gasp out "Sancta simplicitas!" and send my letter to the leading Liberal London daily, then edited by one of the ablest journalists in the country. To my double amazement he also said that he had never expected to agree with the editor of *The Times*, but that in this matter he did so most heartily, and that it would be impossible to publish my letter in any civilized country. But for Mr Massingham, the editor of *The Nation*, it would not have been published at all. It had hardly appeared when the Germans rudely awakened the shocked editors from their dream by a fresh shower of explosive iron rain which spared neither age, sex, nor condition, with the exception of the soldiers home on leave, who, having no illusions on the subject, made for the nearest underground railway station at the first sound of an aircraft gun. No American civilian who stayed in his own country during the war can have any adequate conception of how completely every town in England within reach of the air raids was converted to the view that in the next war the only safe people would be the soldiers in their dug-outs. The authorities lied like Cretans to hide the extent of the damage and danger; for it is one of the necessities of war that from the moment the first shot is fired nobody dare tell the truth on any subject whatever. Not until long after the Armistice, when the claims for compensation from the East Coast towns came before Parliament, did the few people who read Hansard learn that four reported casualties meant four hundred actual ones; that a couple of houses slightly damaged meant a street wrecked; and that a futile and contemptible exhibition of German incompetence and spite, followed by an ignominious flight, meant a daring and successful bombardment. But no extremity of lying could hide the fact that for years nobody in England dared shew a light at night. And all the time the bombs grew bigger. The first bombs tore the fronts off the houses, making them like dolls' houses, with all the furniture in the rooms exposed to view and curiously undisturbed. One of the last destroyed four houses, and made all the rest on that side

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

of the street so unsafe that they had to be closed by order. Meanwhile our R.A.F. was not idle. The Armistice came just in time to stop the Allies from making an air raid on Berlin with the object of smashing it to pieces and asphyxiating the inhabitants. It did not stop many terrible rehearsals in the Rhine towns for that frustrated performance.

I have already pointed out that the operations of the soldiers, consisting of repeated offensives that never quite succeeded, had made everyone despair of a military decision; and when the blockade—that is, the starving out of the civilian population—suddenly made an end of the affair, there was no reason to suppose that the armies, if only their supplies were kept up, could not have gone on fighting for thirty years, or three hundred. Ludendorff does not admit military defeat. He is as confident as ever that with food enough he could have fought all the Allied generals' heads off.

The next war, then, will not be an effort to defeat the opposing army, and thereby compel the defenceless civilians behind it to accept whatever terms may be imposed on them. It will be an effort to compel the civilian population to choose between direct destruction and the same acceptance, even though its army may be intact, well supplied, and covered with military glory. This is practically a new state of affairs; and it makes an end of the old assumption that foreign policy and war are the business of soldiers and diplomats (in effect, of royal sportsmen and their whippers-in) and not of the civilian commonalty. From this point of view nothing is more staggering about the late war than that even the British House of Commons was not informed of it until the country was actually at war, and that the United States were committed to it by a President elected expressly as the high-minded pacifist hero who had kept his country out of the war and was just the man to continue doing so. The citizens of the States might just as well have elected Theodore Roosevelt for all the difference their votes made to the question of peace or war. Neither the American people nor the British people, nor, for the matter of that, the German people, had the slightest desire

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

to go to war; and one consequence of this was that they had to be lied to on a stupendous scale to persuade them that they were the soldiers of God, and the enemy the black legions of Satan, to work them up to the necessary pitch of quarrelsome devilment or Quixotic enthusiasm.

The governing classes were for a time desperately anxious as to whether it would be possible to do this; but the result reassured them so completely that the never-ending audacity of elected persons, and the confident insolence of hereditary magnates, have become a greater danger, and have already caused more misery in Europe (and no doubt in America) than all the Huns that ever followed Attila. They have found out how easy it is to do, and are quite sure they can do it again. The question is, can they? They certainly can if the average citizen remains so boyishly ignorant of the realities of war, and so melodramatic in his conception of its causes and issues, as he was in 1914. But there has been an enormous disillusionment since then. The disbanded soldiers, who were solemnly promised in 1914 that their country would never forget them, are starving in the streets of England two hundred thousand strong. A million and a half Britons who were assured in 1918 that Germany would be thoroughly plundered for their benefit are out of work as a direct consequence of that plunder. No highly civilized population that has been through one war ever wants to go through another—the few who have made fortunes out of it alone excepted. But what are we to do? We are still as helplessly in the hands of our diplomats as ever. Can the Conference tell us what can be done to prevent the English Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and his equivalent in the United States Cabinet, informing their respective compatriots that their countries are at war and that they must step lively for the trenches or for the fleet? Shall we be able to help ourselves even if the waving flags and blaring bands are no longer exciting, and the still louder-blaring liars no longer believed? Not in the least, I should say. Once a shot is fired, all question of right and wrong, of popularity and unpopularity, vanishes: a foreigner is coming for you with a gun, and if you do

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

not shoot him he will shoot you. It is impossible to stop a war once begun: it must be prevented or fought out to the bitter end.

There is only one thing that can prevent it and that is conviction of sin. The Conference will not prevent it, because the delegates have no such conviction. They are swollen with the pride of victory, and impenitent and contumacious as to the wickedness it involved. They have insisted on the trial and punishment of all the German officers who illtreated their prisoners; but no Allied officers have been called to account, the implication being that all the Allied sergeants were lambs, all the Allied colonels gentle-tongued teetotallers, and all the Allied internment camps orphans' asylums. Everybody who is not an ignorant gull in diplomatic matters knows now that the Powers do not believe in peace, and are all preparing for the next war by alliances and counter-alliances. The opening of the Conference has been celebrated by warlike ceremonies round the graves of those pathetic Unknown Warriors who would so much rather have been made much of when they were known and alive, all propagating the belief that war is the most splendid of human activities, and success in it the supreme glory. Had any person suggested the smallest doubt that the Unknown Warriors were in heaven looking proudly down amid a host of angels on the honor paid to their skeletons, he would have been lynched. All the pageantry was military pageantry. Battle flags hang in all the cathedrals. The men who were at Mons or St Mihiel were exalted; and the men who said, "Sirs, ye are brothers: wherefore do ye wrong one to another?" are in prison or silenced. Neither Mr Hughes nor President Harding has ventured to say "War is a crime which we must expiate by extirpating it; for the plunder of the fallen, however disguised as reparation, indemnity, and the like, is theft, and has already brought on the starving people of the victorious nations all the evils of defeat." And no priest has added "The word of the Lord against war has been fulfilled to the bitter uttermost: the kings of the earth who rose up and took counsel against Him are in the dust; and the demagogues who persuaded the people for them have slain more innocents

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

than Herod in their attempts to conduct the peace as they conducted the war."

I should not use these expressions myself, because the people might reply "For God's sake, no more rhetoric: we have had enough of it." I therefore prefer to dwell on the following cold facts. The war has been a delusion and a failure in respect of every one of the objects with which the diplomatists perpetrated it; and the peace has been more delusive and disastrous than the war. It has not readjusted the balance of power to a secure equilibrium: it has left it more unstable than ever, and produced two storm centres, the European and the Pacific, where there was only one before. It has not allayed the fear of Germany which has oppressed the world since 1870: it has intensified it on the part of France to a point at which it has brought her to the verge of open conflict with comparatively phlegmatic England. It has not rescued subjugated nationalities by obliterating strategic frontiers and substituting ethnographic ones: the new frontiers are as unnatural as the old ones, only the jackboot is on the other leg. Belgium is not neutralized: it has now a treaty with France; and England, for the first time in her history, has had to put up with this after half ruining herself three times over in gigantic wars to prevent it. Ordinary political liberty, surviving in Germany, has ceased to exist in England, France, and the United States. The victors have not been relieved from German industrial competition: on the contrary, the Welsh collieries have lost their export trade; the shipwrights and engineers of the Tyneside and the Tees find their occupation gone because all the new ships come from Germany by way of indemnity; the import duties imposed on German exporters are paid by the British consumer who voted for making Germany pay; the victorious heroes who charged the German trenches are flying before the charges of the British mounted police lest they should storm the House of Commons to clamor for bread for their children; and a famous Irish editor, Mr George Russell (A.E.), notes that the only person who has come out of the war with any intellectual credit is Jesus Christ, it being now apparent that if all the combatants had turned

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

the other cheek and given the cloak after the coat they would be much better off than they are at present.

So much for the failures of the war: what about its successes? It has swept the Hapsburgs, the Hohenzollerns, the Romanoffs, and the Ottoman Sultan into the dustbin of history; scattered the empires into groups of republics which have changed the typical form of modern government from the monarchial to the democratic-republican; and set up in the huge country which straddles across the Eurasian frontier a Communist State with an army which has made mincemeat of the invasions of Koltchak, Wrangel, and Denikin: Trotsky, its Carnot, being a genius whom the British police detained as a dangerous character when he was in Canada.

Now God may have intended all that; but most certainly the Kaiser, the Tsar, the Apostolic Emperor, President Poincaré, and Lord (then Sir Edward) Grey did not intend it. The survivors of them would face another war to restore the *status quo ante* if they saw half a chance of success. I cannot answer for President Harding: his country, alone among the belligerents, is not bankrupt; but as it can neither eat nor sell its mountain of gold, and so many of its citizens have nothing else to eat, his sentiments can be guessed without difficulty.

Well, my lords and gentlemen, was it worth while? Man proposes: war disposes. And, as your darling object is that you shall dispose, is it prudent, even leaving the damning of your souls out of the question, to bring into the field, at enormous expense and risk, a force that treats you and your policies as the autumn wind treats the fallen leaves? What is the use of victories that land you in all the destitution of defeat, surrounded by revolutionary volcanoes on the sites of the nice orderly royal and imperial Foreign Offices, full of well-dressed cadets of the governing classes, that welcomed you before? You have learnt to play billiards with the spot stroke barred: why not try diplomacy with the sword stroke barred?

I have little hope of your having the nerve or the vision to do it, perhaps because some of the big changes that have been so

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

distressing to you have been congenial to me. You will probably declare with M. Briand that everything I have said is true ("only too true" will be the formula); that you desire nothing more earnestly than the disappearance of war from civilized life; and that, when you have fulfilled your first patriotic duty of making your country absolutely secure against the hostile combinations which threaten her on all sides, you will certainly see what can be done. And I shall thank you for nothing. I am already aware that you are in favor of all goodness, provided it costs nothing. Indeed, I am the first to admit that to assume that anything injurious to you can possibly be good is to deny the righteousness and benevolence of God. Only I am not convinced that you know what is good for you quite so far-sightedly as God does. Until you do you will continue to glory in slaughtering one another under the mistaken impression that the plunder of your victories will enrich you and their conquests make you strong. And, really, whilst those are your beliefs, I doubt whether you could be better employed.

CHAPTER XV

BURNING THE CANDLE AT BOTH ENDS

THE mess made of Europe by the Treaty of Versailles was kept in countenance by the mess made of our home affairs the moment the strain on us was relaxed by the armistice. It is impossible to contemplate it without being tempted to declare that only under fire will Englishmen listen to reason or think of anything outside their immediate profits and pleasures. Such a remark is invidious only in view of the fact that the other belligerents did no better, except in Italy and Russia, where the disbanded soldiers destroyed the existing forms of government. Currency inflation, which raged throughout the continent, was comparatively mild with us: prices at worst only doubled. In Germany they soared to such astronomical altitudes that commerce finally had to be conducted with American dollars, a practical alternative which forced the German government, and indeed all the bankrupt Governments, to stabilize their currencies on pain of having them superseded by American gold. The Germans boldly and sensibly stabilized with a gold mark at 20 to the £, the old rate, and thereby re-established the credit of German money, but not before there had been a devastating plunder of proprietors and creditors in general by the paying off of mortgages, debentures, insurances, and long dated debts of all sorts in worthless paper money, thereby relieving industry of heavy burthens, but reducing numbers of the middle and professional classes to abject beggary.

The French, after inflating until the tenpenny franc ceased to have any appreciable value, at last threw commercial honesty to the winds, and stabilized it at twopence, thus effecting a barefaced repudiation of eighty per cent of the loan they had raised for the war. As they could have afforded to stabilize at tenpence much better than the Germans at 20, Europe gasped; but nobody dared mention the transaction, much less criticize it, except Mr Philip Snowden, who left the world divided between awestruck admiration of his blunt bravery and terror lest some dreadful conse-

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

quences might follow from his saying aloud what everybody who understood the affair was thinking.

Russia, having liquidated all her internal debts by throwing over the capitalist system and substituting Communism, was insanely attacked by us, not only by an armed invasion, but by financial aid to the military adventurers who were attempting to restore the Tsardom. The only effect was to give Russia a claim for reparations to set against her foreign indebtedness, and to provoke a curious threatening growl from our own proletariat which made Mr Winston Churchill drop his war against Russia like a hot potato. Then, spiting our own noses to vex our own faces, we refused to trade with Russia or to lend capital to her. In vain did our Labor leaders point out that even if we made machinery for Russia for nothing our workers would be better employed in maintaining their skill and their habits of regular industry in this way than demoralizing themselves by idling on the dole: two millions of them. A frantic hatred and dread of Bolshevism, fed by a rancorous Press campaign representing Russia as a pandemonium in which such ridiculous impossibilities as Nationalization of Women were typical everyday realities, produced a Russophobia which for a time wrecked the Labor Party and placed in power a Cabinet of reactionaries whose worst pranks, including a threat to annihilate the Egyptians by cutting off the Nile and a flat burglary of the Russian Arcos stores in London, were fortunately too childish to be taken seriously.

The central error of the time was an impatient disposition to flout all theory, and consequently all principle, in politics, industry, and finance. It produced also an extravagant reaction against any sort of rule in private relations. A license in sexual intercourse, in the use of drugs and alcohol, in dress and undress, accompanied by a mania for dancing, did both good and harm; but both ways it was anarchic, myopic, and defiant of every plea for a constructive policy. It was pleasant to see Bright Young Things having a good time; but it was not pleasant to see how very soon they ceased to be either bright or young. They looked battered and 35 when they should have looked still beautiful and

BURNING THE CANDLE AT BOTH ENDS

25, all through unrestrained thoughtlessness and ignorance of how to live.

The dull old things in the political world were just as disastrous. They, too, would not hear of anything so painful as thinking. During the war they had met every appeal to their minds with the formula "Remember: we are at war"; and when the armistice called even more urgently for mental exercise they said, in effect "We went through the war without thinking; and we won. Why should we not get through the peace without it?"

The crash came in 1921. The resumption of normal life after the war produced an enormous demand for the replacement of those needs and amenities and luxuries of civil life which had been stinted or cut off or worn out or destroyed during the war, as well as for the industrial plant for their supply. There was a prodigious boom in business; and, on the strength of an assumption that it would last for ever, monstrous overcapitalization took place, followed by overproduction and glut. The slump followed in less than three years. I select an article written by me early in 1924 as illustrating the state of things then (it is little better now) as well as the state of mind to which it provoked me and everybody with any economic sense.

THE PRACTICAL MAN OF BUSINESS

(*From The New Leader of the 1st February 1924*)

In England Parliament has actually become interesting to people who are not party politicians. Fifty years ago or thereabouts, Ruskin wrote to Carlyle asking him how it could possibly be supposed that the party speeches of Gladstone and Disraeli were of more importance than the droning of two old bagpipes. And from the point of view of men who, like Ruskin, were thinking of the condition of the people and the destiny of civilization there was no possible retort. Nothing has since happened to improve the intellectual credit of the House of Commons. The war suspended judgment for a while, because any fool can manage a war, or rather allow the war to manage him, if he has

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

plenty of energy and no concern for anything but victory, as indeed it is necessary that he should have no other. But the real test of statesmanship is peacemaking; and here we are, more than five years after the order to cease firing, and no peace yet, only ruin and unemployment and starvation and bankruptcy going from bad to worse on such a scale that if Ruskin were alive he would probably wish the war back again.

England's share of this mess is the result of government by practical business men. That is why nobody wants ever to see a practical business man again within a hundred miles of Downing Street. The efficiency of these gentlemen in wrecking the magnificent national organization that grew up in 1915 after their failure to supply our batteries with more than one shell each a day at monstrous prices (our national employees meanwhile standing idly by their benches in Woolwich Arsenal at full wages) was prodigious. They sold off nine first-rate national factories for less than they paid immediately afterwards to a private contractor for one new one. They filled their newspapers week by week with articles describing the corruption, extravagance, and gross inefficiency of national work, until they had worked up the average citizen into a heated conviction that nothing could save the country but the utter destruction of every vestige of our public capital and industry, except what could be saved by the immediate transfer of as much of it as could pay dividends (much the least valuable part of it) to the profiteers. The rest fell under "the Geddes axe" of pseudo-retrenchment. To keep the demobilized men quiet whilst their chances of employment were being destroyed, the practical business men handed out doles in all directions, and were afraid to withdraw them when the mischief was done lest they should provoke a revolution by men used to the sight and shedding of blood. Never was there such a ramp in the history of Boodledum.

Meanwhile, Germany was being made to pay. She paid in ships, and ruined the shipyards of the Tees, the Tyne, and the Clyde. She paid in coal, and ruined the South Wales coalfields. Mr Lloyd George was reduced to declaring that Germany must

BURNING THE CANDLE AT BOTH ENDS

pay in potash only; and by the time the laughter subsided, it was evident that Germany was past paying at all, and that the business of the rest of the world (including America) was to treat Germany exactly as wounded German soldiers picked up on the field of battle were treated: that is, nurse it back to health and strength at the expense of the victors. But M. Poincaré, being a practical business man, could not see it; and Marshal Foch, a military baby crying for the moon, moaned for Security, meaning that France could never be secure as long as there existed a rival whom she could not destroy, at which point Mr Ramsay MacDonald remarked that such a security would be rather insecure for England. Even the practical business men could not quite swallow M. Poincaré finding eight hundred millions to send to Poland or to any other State that would arm against Germany, whilst he could not find six hundred millions to pay France's war debt to England. People who had made colossal fortunes out of the war began to hope for another war.

Germany and Austria, unable to pay, were forced to cheat their creditors. A Government can always do this quite easily by the method of Henry VIII. That monarch, owing a considerable sum in gold, paid it in short weight silver. The sixteenth century, having retained something of the candor of the Middle Ages, called this debasing the coinage. We call it inflation. It tempts even solvent governments as a very effective method of concealed taxation. It was resorted to by the British Government during the war. Gold was withdrawn, and a paper currency substituted. Then, by the simple expedient of printing and circulating twice as many notes as there were goods for them to represent, prices were doubled; and the Government and all the other debtors in the country, were enabled to pay every pound they owed by a note that was really worth only ten shillings. The practical business men who were debtors instead of creditors were delighted, and declared, and still maintain, that the Government had by a master-stroke of finance doubled the capital of the country. They are now advocating a repetition of the master-stroke as a means of providing capital to employ the unemployed. Germany and

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Austria can hardly have had any such insensate delusion; but they jumped at this old way of paying new debts, and issued paper money until I was able, at the recent election, to exhibit an ordinary letter from Germany on which the postage, at the pre-war rate of exchange, was four thousand million pounds.

All the Governments followed suit more or less, to the ruin of people with fixed incomes, and to the utter dismay of those who had, mostly by considerable sacrifices, paid life insurance premiums over a long period of years, only to find now that the sufficient provision for their widows or daughters for which they had paid was become a beggar's pittance. And quite a number of the practical business men assure us that the remedy is more inflation. Do not say hastily that they are either fools or rascals. Some of them are both; but for the most part they are simple ignoramuses, and, in respect of high finance, congenital incapables. I doubt whether anything like two per million of the adult population of Europe understand finance or world politics. The bankers and professional financiers certainly do not. In fact, they are in some respects the worst blunderers, because they always think of invested capital as consumable and of credit as concrete wealth, in spite of such glaring facts as that the war loan capital cannot be consumed afresh because it has all been eaten up or worn out or blown to smithereens. One man can sell a war bond to another who can spare the price out of the current year's income; but if all the bondholders attempted to sell simultaneously the price of their bonds would crash to zero. The same thing is true of industrial stocks. To consume capital means to eat it and drink it; and you cannot eat and drink the London Midland and Scottish Railway or the pottery chimneys of Hanley.

As to credit, bankers think you can build factories with credit. But you cannot. Credit is only an opinion entertained by one man of another man's ability and willingness to repay a loan. The loan itself must be a loan of solid goods, or it will not build a factory or employ a single man in industry of any sort. The present bankruptcy of Europe has been produced by Governments acting on the advice of Stock Exchange operators and

BURNING THE CANDLE AT BOTH ENDS

bankers, who, though they are dealing with capital and credit every day, have no more idea of what capital and credit really are than a motor-car dealer has of metallurgy or physics. The most striking recent proof of this is that when the Liberal and Conservative parties went to the poll, playing as their trump card against Labor the danger of a levy on capital, neither of them was able to state the real objection to it, which is, that the Capel Court notion that the possessor of fifty thousand a year is a millionaire is a delusion for the statesman, in spite of the fact that an individual here and there with that income can generally exchange it for a million of loose cash, provided there is no such run on the market as a general tax on capital would produce. Apparently neither the capitalist candidates nor the journalists who were supporting them were acquainted with this simple fact. They all clamored as if a tax on capital were feasible but disastrous, instead of being, as it is, too good to be true.

But the country is paying a million a day interest to the holders of its War Loan stock; and there is no reasonable answer to the contention of the Labor Party that this debt was incurred by exempting the money of the capitalists from the conscription that was ruthlessly applied to the lives and limbs and to the businesses and professional goodwills of everyone else. Accordingly a deferred conscription of income (nominally a Debt Redemption Levy) is demanded by the Labor Party; and its two capitalist rivals have nothing to say except to repeat their wrong reasons for avoiding a levy on capital. Everyone who is not a holder of War Loan Stock is agreed that the daily million burden must be lightened somehow. Yet it is merely a collection from capitalists to be immediately redistributed among them.

The situation against which all the English parties are hard up can be judged far better by anyone who has grasped these facts than by the most diligent reader of gossip about Mr Baldwin and Mr MacDonald. The advantage of the Labor Party in such troubled times as these is that it stands between the country and the possibility of revolution. The Labor Party is not the Left Wing of the general Marxian reaction (largely middle class)

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

against Capitalism. Mr MacDonald is freely denounced as a bourgeois Parliamentarian by revolutionary leaders who have a dangerously powerful argument at their disposal. They point out that when the German bayonet was at the throat of the Capitalist Government in 1915, it suddenly found that it could organize industry nationally, and feed and clothe the people better than most of them had ever been fed or clothed before, even whilst employing most of them in destructive instead of constructive work; and the moral drawn is that the British bayonet in civil war can perform the same miracle if only the workers will not allow themselves to be humbugged by Parliamentary representation.

Thus the Labor Party, appealing to the disgust and disappointment of the country with the Capitalist parties, is itself threatened by physical force propagandists who appeal to the disgust and disappointment of the country with Parliamentary methods as such. This puts the Capitalist parties in the awkward dilemma of having either to countenance the Labor Party as far as they can bear to, or playing into the hands of Mr MacDonald's rivals, the would-be Lenins and Mussolinis. Thus it is quite probable that the Labor Party, once in office, may be able to carry on much longer and go much farther with only a minority in the House than is believed at present by the people who derive their ideas of the situation from the ravings of Lord Rothermere's papers, which, however, are mostly read without injury by people who would no more dream of reading a political article than I should of studying the football news.

These remonstrances produced no effect. There was abundant clamor for steps to restore the industries of the country and to put an end to unemployment; but instead of seeking statesman-like solutions we set up an exasperating drivel about the export trade. If exports diminished England was lost. If exports could be increased British industry would be restored and all would be

BURNING THE CANDLE AT BOTH ENDS

well. And the revival would absorb the unemployed, who could never be employed without more exports. All of which meant simply that the most vociferous of our practical men of business and the chairmen who were their mouthpieces and the members of Parliament who were the chairmen's echoes were interested in the export trade.

It never occurred to them that the business of a statesman is to keep trade at its irreducible minimum. Trade is only a means of overcoming natural obstacles between the producer and the consumer by means of roads, cars, railways, and ships, with their huge retinue of packers, carriers, shippers, transport workers manual and clerical of all grades, and middlemen effecting strings of exchanges, necessary and unnecessary. To hear the practical business men talk and to read the city articles you would suppose that the man who should increase the obstacles, double the length of the journeys, multiply goods trains, and, like Helen of Troy, launch a thousand ships, would be a far greater benefactor than the philanthropist desiderated by Swift, who should make two blades of grass grow where one grew before. And, conversely, that the statesman who should bring consumer and producer nearer to one another, and abolish or diminish the distances and the number of exchanges, would be a scoundrel bent on the ruin of his race and fatherland. That was natural enough; for to the cobbler there is nothing like leather, and to the trader there is nothing like trade; but what is to be said of governments who allow cobblers to govern them?

The unemployment question was trifled with in the same way: what was looked to was a restoration of pre-war trade. This was impossible. The war, by greatly hindering foreign trade, had forced all nations to develop their powers of independent self-support by substituting native water power and minerals for British coal, and manufacturing for themselves, or buying elsewhere, the commodities they formerly bought from us. The notion that they are likely to retrace these steps for the sake of replacing British industry in its pre-war channels (which is what "restoring" it means) is childish: its vogue only proves that our

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

practical business men are neither practical nor businesslike: they are mere routineers who, because they cannot change their habits, want to be paid for pumping wells that have run dry. It is waste of time to rail at them: the statesman must step in and think for them instead of depending on them to think for him. In short, industry must be reorganized by the State or not at all: the grab of the profiteer is hopelessly discredited as an industrial *primum mobile*. The best minds in England have foreseen this all along.

But the reorganization of industry will not put an end to unemployment. Other things being equal it will increase it by economizing time. If by machinery and what is called rationalization we enable one person to produce in a working day of eight hours what was formerly produced by two (and there are instances in which the economies already achieved are not 100 per cent but many thousands per cent), then you must either reduce the working day or throw one of the persons into the streets unemployed. The complication of the huge web of modern capitalistic industry can obscure this simple proposition, but cannot invalidate it until it can invalidate the fact that two and two make four. Well, we have deliberately chosen to keep to the old hours or even to increase them, making the one worker produce twice as much as before, using the doubled profit to enlarge our class of rich idlers, and throwing the other worker into the ranks of the unemployed. We used to leave him to starve; but we now give him a dole and make him a pure idler. Literate poor men write to me complaining of the high price of my books. They cannot afford to buy them because they are working fourteen hours a day for seventy shillings a week (subject to rack rent) with a wife and two children to support on it. That is, they are each doing two men's work with two million unemployed eating their heads off.

I shouted this as loudly as I could in the ears of the statesmen and journalists and men of business. They pretended not to hear me, and renewed their chatter and clatter about exports to distract attention from the feeble but troublesome cries of simple arithmetic. They persisted in heaping unearned incomes on the surfeited rich, and buying off the complaining poor with doles. They

BURNING THE CANDLE AT BOTH ENDS

burnt the candle at both ends. They are still burning it that way, and still discussing exports and protective duties as a means of staving off the final burning out. They are hopeful because, as in the days of the Tariff Reform League, Protection is being welcomed by our inland home industries and their financiers before it is wrecked on our coasts against our shipping industries, which would fain have everything produced thousands of miles of ocean away from the consumer. Meanwhile, the candle burns fast.

What a nation!

CHAPTER XVI

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

WHEN my presence at Geneva during the annual Assembly of the League of Nations in 1928 was mentioned in the Press, I received several letters, of which the following is a fair sample.

"I cannot help being rather surprised and shocked to read that you 'sit on the bench of Mockers and Hypocrites.' . . . In this country every little child knows that the League of Nations is only a bluff and nothing but an instrument for the policy of the Allied Forces. . . . I really am at a loss to understand why you don't feel your responsibility as a Mental Tutor of the World when taking such a step as taking part in the comedy of Geneva, which is a tragedy for every country that does not find mercy in the eyes of the world's High Finance."

This letter is not a statesman's utterance. It is a crude expression of the popular impatience which sees no more in the League than an instrument for the instantaneous extirpation of war, and is ready to throw it on the scrap-heap the moment it becomes clear that no such operation is possible, and that the big Powers have not, and never have had, any intention of relinquishing any jot of their sovereignty, or depending on any sort of strength and security other than military. Roughly and generally it is a fact that the Pacifist oratory at the Assembly is Christmas card platitudine at best and humbug at worst. The permanent departments of the League have to fight hard to defeat the frequent attempts to sabotage it by the big Powers through their deciduous members.

Whilst I was there the Press was keeping the public amused, not to say gulled, by gossip about the Assembly meetings, at which nothing happens but pious speeches which might have been delivered fifty years ago. It was so impossible to listen to them, or to keep awake during the subsequent inevitable translations, that the audience had to be kept in its place by a regulation, physically enforced, that no visitor should be allowed to leave the hall except during the five minutes set apart for that

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

purpose between speech and translation. Fortunately, the young ladies of the Secretariat, who have plenty of theatrical instinct, arrange the platform in such a way that the president, the speakers, and the bureau are packed low down before a broad tableau curtain which, being in three pieces, provides most effective dramatic entrances right and left of the centre. When a young lady secretary has a new dress, or for any other reason feels that she is looking her best, she waits until the speaker—possibly a Chinese gentleman carefully plodding through a paper written in his best French—has reduced half the public galleries to listless distraction and the other half to stertorous slumber. Then she suddenly, but gracefully, snatches the curtains apart and stands revealed, a captivating mannequin, whilst she pretends to look round with a pair of sparkling eyes for her principal on the bureau. The effect is electric: the audience wakes up and passes with a flash from listless desperation to tense fascination, to the great encouragement of the speaker, who, with his back to the vision beautiful, believes he has won over the meeting at last.

But for these vamping episodes, and such occasional sensations as the possibility of a great platform artist like M. Briand intervening and shaking the League to its foundations by getting his feet on the ground with an allusion to real things as they really are, nobody would face the task of acting as spectator, least of all in the distinguished visitors' gallery, in which there is little distinction and absolutely no ventilation. A very able administrative official, whose heart and soul are in the League, told me that he has been at Geneva eight years, and never attended an Assembly meeting yet.

Whilst this was going on at the Victoria Hotel, and being daily foisted on the public as the real thing, a battle royal, on the upshot of which the very existence of the League as an effective international organ depended, was raging at the other side of the lake in the National Hotel, between Sir Eric Drummond, the permanent British Secretary-General appointed by the Treaty, and the Assembly member sent for the month by the British Conservative Cabinet. These deciduous members arrive mostly in scandalous ignorance of the obligations already contracted by their

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Governments to the permanent governing bodies of the League. As party men they are at the opposite pole to the "good Europeans" of Geneva. As patriots they conceive themselves to be advocates of British national interests (not to say nationalist spies in the international camp), and expect to be supported devotedly by their distinguished fellow-countrymen on the permanent staffs. They are rudely undeceived the moment they begin their crude attempts at sabotage.

Thus the British Jingo Imperialist finds himself writhing in the grip of Sir Eric Drummond whilst the French Poincarist-Militarist takes the full count in the first round from M. Albert Thomas. In 1928, the British Assembly member, a novice in Geneva like myself, had to deal with the League's Budget, and tried starvation tactics. Parading the poverty of England, he opposed every increase in the necessarily growing estimates. The difference at stake to his country was about £4000! When he was informed that the British representative on the governing body of the International Labor Office had, with full instructions from his Government, pledged the British realm to the increases, he desperately declared that the British Government could not be bound by the action of its own instructed representative at the International Labor Office. He was backed by the countries which were losing no opportunity to reduce the League to impotence, and, in particular, to cripple the Labor Office. How could a gentleman and a Conservative tolerate a Labor Office? What has Labor to do with Diplomacy?

His efforts were as unsuccessful as they were unedifying. Sir Eric jumped on him with all the weight of his authority and his splendid record as the first creator of the international staff. M. Albert Thomas, director of the International Labor Office, a first-rate administrator and a devastating debater, wiped the floor with what Sir Eric had left, all the more effectively because he represented France, the most bellicose of the Powers, but also presumably the poorest, as she had just repudiated 80 per cent of her national debt, and had therefore the best excuse for meanness. In the end Sir Eric, M. Thomas, and the League won with

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

a completeness that made their victory a disgrace to the vanquished; but the public outside Geneva, gaping at the Assembly camouflage, missed it all. Judging the League, like my vituperative correspondent, by the Assembly, the more hardheaded of our taxpayers see nothing in it but a futile hypocrisy, and cannot understand why they should be mulcted to support it. And they are so ignorant of its constitution that a victory by Sir Eric Drummond would be taken by them, if it ever came to their knowledge, as a British victory to be credited to the British Government.

This situation, in which the permanent nominees of the constituent governments are thrown into resolute opposition to their deciduous representatives, is chronic at Geneva. One of M. Albert Thomas' greatest victories there was won over the French Government when he defeated its attempt to exclude agricultural workers from the scope of the Labor Office on the ground that they are not "industrials." The really great thing that is happening at Geneva is the growth of a genuinely international public service, the chiefs of which are ministers in a coalition which is, in effect, an incipient international Government. In the atmosphere of Geneva patriotism perishes: a patriot there is simply a spy who cannot be shot. Even Sir Austen Chamberlain, with his naïve assurances that he is an Englishman first and last, and that the British Empire comes before everything with him, must be aware by this time that in saying this he has only exhilarated the young lions of the secretariat by a standing joke so outrageous that only a man with a single eyeglass could have got away with it.

I am fully aware of the tendency, lately exposed by Señor Madariaga in the columns of *The Times*, to fill the posts in the secretariat as well as the benches of the Assembly by diplomats sent to uphold the national interests of their country *contra mundum*, and thus to undo the excellent beginning made by Sir Eric Drummond in building up his staff of Internationalists from the ground. The system of appointment, which, being frank jobbery is the best of all systems in good hands and the worst in bad, makes such a substitution feasible enough. Fortunately, dip-

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Iomats have to be bred in-and-in in Foreign Offices and Embassies: ventilation is fatal to them. Now Geneva is a veritable temple of the winds. I will not say that the sort of young gentleman who, being paid to allow his mind to play on the problems of European history with a view to inventing foreign policies, does, in fact, allow it to play on the adventures of ambassadors and their valets with a view to inventing funny stories and making himself socially agreeable (a praiseworthy ambition), is not to be met with in Geneva; but he is an anachronism there, and, being trained to keep himself susceptible to varying social influences and conceptions of good form, soon suffers a Lake change, if not into something rich and strange, at least into an anecdotist whose subjects are the relations between the League's constituent States to one another instead of the relations between the kitchens and drawing rooms at the Embassies.

In short, the League is a school for the new international statesmanship as against the old Foreign Office diplomacy. This appears more clearly on the spot than at home, where the League is thought of as a single institution under a single roof. In Geneva it is seen as three institutions in three separate and not even adjacent buildings. Two of them are only converted hotels, the quondam Victoria Hotel housing the Assembly or Hot Air Exchange, which I have already described, and the quondam National Hotel, now the Secretariat or Palace of the Nations, sheltering Sir Eric Drummond and an international civil service staffed with a free variety of the upper division Whitehall type. In contrast to these survivals is the International Labor Office building, brand-new, designed *ad hoc*, a hive, a Charterhouse, with Labor glorified in muscular statues and splendid stained glass windows designed in the latest manner of half-human, half-Robotesque drawing, and with every board room panelled and furnished and chandeliered with the gift of some State doing its artistic best, and succeeding to an extraordinary degree in avoiding trade commonplaces and achieving distinction without grot- esqueness. I have never been in a modern business building more handsomely equipped. Here M. Albert Thomas reigns, not as a

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

king, which would immediately suggest a French king, but as a Pope; for this is the true International of which Moscow only dreams; and M. Thomas, though a Frenchman to the last hair of his black beard, and a meridional at that, is the most genuinely Catholic potentate in the world. And here the air is quite fresh: no flavor of Whitehall leather and prunella can be sniffed anywhere. These neo-Carthusians are of a new order, in whose eyes the agreeable gentlemen who have been shoved into the hotel down the road with Sir Eric are the merest relics of a species already extinct, though too far behind the time to know that it is dead. Nevertheless, the neo-Carthusians know the value of those happy accidents of the old order who run the commissions at the Secretariat, and whose work necessarily overlaps their own at many points. And the Secretariat, though not always quite clear as to why this Labor Office is there or what it is for,¹ and only

¹ The Secretariat has some excuse for its bewilderment on this point. There is not on the face of it any reason why there should be two estates of the international realm at Geneva instead of one. The explanation is so absurd that nobody guesses it. When President Wilson was planning the League he asked Mr Gompertz what Labor expected from the League. (Mr Gompertz was the secretary to the American Federation of Labor and therefore the figure-head of American Trade Unionism.) Mr Gompertz could think of nothing more definite to say than that labor must not be bought and sold as a commodity in the markets of the millennium at which the League aimed. As Mr Gompertz opposes Socialism strenuously in the interest of the conservative Trade Unionism which confines itself to the organization of the sale of labor as a commodity in the market today, he was evidently in the position of Balaam, blessing where he intended to curse. However, there was nothing for it but to give Mr Gompertz a pledge that his stipulation should have due consideration; and it was in fulfilment of this pledge that the Labor Office was established as part of the constitution of the League. A less lucid transaction can hardly be imagined; but the Labor Office is none the less an invaluable asset of the proletarian cause. That it is a nuisance and a mistake from the capitalist point of view makes it necessary for sympathizers with public international regulation of labor to be on their guard against possible attempts to merge it in the Secretariat in the name of Unification, or some such pious word. The effect of unification would depend on whether the constitution of the unified body would be that of the Labor Office, which is modern

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

dimly and rather sceptically conscious of the new proletarian politics (not having found any mention of them in Thucydides, Grote, and Macaulay), finds that M. Thomas is a tower of strength to it when the League's existence is threatened by the big Powers whose moral standards it is forcing up.

An example will illustrate this moral pressure, and answer the question "What do all these people do besides pretending that the League can prevent war?" Take the case of the mandates. The Powers have to govern not only their own dominions, but countries which are placed under their tutelage until the inhabitants are able to govern themselves. Let us suppose that Ruritania is given a mandate to govern Lilliput provisionally for Lilliput's good. Ruritania, neither knowing nor caring what a mandate means, but seeing a chance of extending its territory, grabs Lilliput eagerly, and proceeds to exercise all the irresponsible powers of a sovereign conqueror there without regard to the native point of view. This goes on until the representative of Ruritania at Geneva is called on to give an account of Ruritania's stewardship. The representative has a very natural impulse to say haughtily: "Ask no questions and you will be told no lies"; but he finds that this is out of order, as a mandate is, after all, a mandate. Being unable to give answers which are at once satisfactory and truthful, he does what every gentleman does for the credit of his country: that is, lies like a Pauline Cretan. But, being a gentleman, he does not enjoy this method of saving face. When he goes back to Ruritania, he angrily asks what on earth the officials meant by putting him into such a fix, and insists that it shall not occur again, as it must unless the government of Lilliput is brought up to mandate level. This may not be immediately possible; but at all events enough gets done to enable the League

and fairly proof against class manipulation, or that of the Secretariat, which makes such manipulation dangerously easy. As the Labor Office and its friends are quite willing to let the Secretariat die a natural death, it may safely be assumed for the present that no proposal affecting the independence of the Labor Office will be made except by those whose real object is to abolish it.

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

to be faced next year with no more than a reasonable resort to prevarication.

The Howard Society, heartbroken by the atrocities to which not only convicted felons but untried prisoners are subject in many lands, is striving for a humane international agreement in the matter. If the League of Nations did not exist, such an object would be unattainable. Without the Labor Office an international agreement by the nations not to compete industrially by sweating their workers would be equally impossible. As it is, there is an agreement limiting the permissible duration of the working day which England is shirking, but which Geneva will shame her into presently: an important psychological operation which would not be practicable without the Labor Office. Even were there no such question as that of war and peace, the League would be able to justify its existence ten times over: indeed this question is now rather the main drawback to the League than its *raison d'être*. Take into account the incipient international court of justice at The Hague, with the body of international law which will grow from it, and the case for maintaining the League becomes irresistible, and the attempts to starve it disgracefully stupid, even if the Kellogg Pact be nothing but humbug. I stress this because, as a matter of fact, Mr Kellogg was duped into taking a step backward towards war under the impression that he was driving the Powers to make a giant stride towards peace. By the original covenant of the League, the Powers are bound not to make war until they have first submitted their case to the League: that is, without a considerable delay. Since then the big fighting Powers have been trying to extricate themselves from this obligation and be once more free to make war without notice whenever they want to. Their first success in this direction was the Locarno agreement, the second the Kellogg Pact. Both of them established conditions under which the covenant might be violated; and the Kellogg Pact put the finishing touch by providing that the Powers might go to war at any time "in self-defence." What this means is plain in the light of the fact that the German attack in 1914 was, perhaps, the most complete technical case of self-

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

defence in military history: Germany's avowed enemy, Russia, having mobilized against her. But, indeed, since such excuses for war became conventional there has never been a war which lacked them. Of all the wars which Commander Kenworthy, in his significant book *Will Civilisation Crash?* has shewn to be on the diplomatic cards, including, especially, a war between the British Empire and the United States, there is not one that could not be, and, if it breaks out, will not be, represented as a war of self-defence on both sides. Mr Kellogg had better have excepted wars of aggrandisement or revenge, because any Power claiming the privilege would at least have been in an indefensible moral position. As it is, the League must steadfastly ignore all the much-advertized proceedings at Locarno and Paris exactly as it was itself ignored on both occasions, and insist on the Covenant as still binding.

But the Pact made the pacifist ice so thin in 1928 that the Assembly skaters hardly dared to move on it; and this was why M. Briand made such a sensation when he cut a figure or two on the outside edge as if there were nothing the matter. The panic-stricken journalists accused him of all sorts of malicious intentions; but he really said only two things, both of which needed saying. The first was that Germany's pose as a disarmed State was only a *reductio ad absurdum* of disarmament, as Germany, with her convertible commercial aircraft, was just as able as any of the Allies to make the only sort of surprise attack that is now really dreaded. The second was that the next war may not be a war of conquest or self-defence or revenge, but a crusade: a crusade for Internationalism against Nationalism and Imperialism, for Socialism against Capitalism, for Bolshevism against Liberal democracy: in short, a war for ideals, in which case the present alliance between M. Briand and M. Poincaré would hardly hold. M. Briand did not give these instances. I am crossing his t's and dotting his i's very freely; but that is what it came to.

If it were not for such occasional interventions as this of M. Briand, the Assembly might be dismissed as mere window-dressing in an otherwise empty shop. But window-dressing has its im-

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

portance. If the big Powers neglect it as part of their habit of ignoring the League of Nations and making pacts and "naval arrangements" and the like behind its back whenever they are really interested, or slighting it when they are not, whilst at the same time the little States are clinging to it and sending the best men they can spare to represent them at it, it may end in the League being dominated at some important crisis by the superior ability of the envoy of some hardly perceptible South American Republic, and the big Powers being reduced to insignificance by the incapacity for international affairs of second-rate party careerists who have no business to be at Geneva at all. The Genevan prestige of England stood high in the days when the Labor Government sent Ramsay MacDonald and Arthur Henderson to discuss the protocol. In 1928 we had novices with absurd instructions writhing helplessly in the grip, not only of first-rate officials who are also in effect ministers, but of representatives of baby States whose armaments, when they have any, are comparatively negligible.

Even if the Cabinets of the big Powers are still so short-sighted and narrow-minded as to wish to reduce the League to insignificance, they will certainly not do it by sending half-tried lightweights there when the smaller States are sending their heaviest champions. Neither, however, must they send what are called representative persons. M. Briand never received a deeper insult than when the French Press, imagining that he had merely made a vulgar attack on the Germans, congratulated him on having been the spokesman of French opinion. His real achievement was to have held the fort for sane internationalism for some years in the teeth of Poincarism. Geneva is not the place for the man in the street. The street is full of persons with parochial minds: jingo minds, imperial minds, foreigner-hating minds, senselessly pugnacious minds, and senselessly terrified minds. A League representing such people would wreck civilization in ten years if they could by any miracle be induced to combine against it. Our salvation in these days depends on the small and unrepresentative percentage of persons who can see further than the end of their

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

noses; and of such must the League be if its enormous potential values are to be realized.

The League is not, as many of its friends fear, in any danger of dissolution. Its roots had struck deep before it appeared above ground in 1919; and in spite of its apparent impotence in the matter of war and peace all the serious statesmen of the big Powers now know that they cannot do without it. It may be said of it, as Voltaire and Robespierre said of God, that if there were no League, it would be necessary to invent one. But it may not always be *the* League, one and indivisible. Already there are two Leagues of Nations: one so-called at Geneva, and the other called the United States of America. The Geneva League is not psychologically homogeneous; and in 1928 it received an alarming shock in consequence. The most considerable British statesman at Geneva then was Lord Lytton, who was representing, not the British western, but the British eastern Empire. And his contribution to the proceedings of the Assembly shewed how very unreal a League of Nations—even one which virtually comprises two great Leagues stretching from the Urals to the Rockies—may become east of Suez.

Speaking as the member for India, Lord Lytton said that the Geneva League was not worth to India what it was costing her. Then he struck at the Achilles heel of the League. He reminded the Assembly that the decisions of the League must be unanimous, and left it to infer that if its proceedings continued to lack all interest for India, no more unanimous decisions would be forthcoming. And at that he left it.

Now it is clear that if Asia uses the League to deadlock Europe and America, Europe and America must admit that East and West cannot work in double harness, and that the East must have Leagues of its own, working with Geneva just as America does. This seems likely, now that Lord Lytton has fired his warning maroon, to be the first fission. In 1929 M. Briand took the first step by proposing a European League within the League, with what success remains to be seen. It may be that the Eurasian frontier is not the psychological one; for homogeneity is strained

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

at Geneva longitudinally as well as latitudinally. The Nordic race beloved of North America and German "blonde beasts" may be a romantic fiction; but when we speak of a Nordic temperament and a Latin temperament we are indicating facts which distinguish the north from the south of Europe as they distinguish the north from the south of America; and these facts may deadlock or greatly hamper Geneva until it recognizes that the Federation of the World will come before the Parliament of Man, which can hardly be realized until Man becomes a much less miscellaneous lot than he is at present.

*

The above description of the League of Nations was printed in many newspapers and issued as a tract by the Fabian Society. It fitly ends this book, with just a word added. The nations have not yet trained their Foreign Offices into an instinctive habit of referring international questions to the League. Diplomatic instincts are still all the other way: the moment a difficulty arises Ministers for Foreign Affairs forget all about it, and either hurl defiances at one another or propose conferences and make pacts as if it did not exist. And the League is still too uncertain of its powers to call the offenders to account. There have been moments—and they are still recurring—when it has been clearly up to Sir Eric Drummond to send a peremptory telegram to Signor A or Monsieur B or Lord or Sir or Mister C, asking (in the correct diplomatic terms, of course) who he thinks he is, what he supposes he is doing, and why in the name of all the demons of diplomacy he doesn't read the Covenant of the League and respect the obligations it imposes on his country. It is evident that as the right to do this can never be explicitly conferred, it must be inferred and assumed. Its assumption is only a matter of nerve. I look forward to Sir Eric's rising to the situation next time.

One last word. In calling this book *What I Really Wrote About the War*, I have exposed myself to the obvious repartee "Does it matter?"

My reply is that it does.

APPENDIX

IN the body of this book I have omitted all the merely personal squabbles about the accuracy of my statements which I could not always avoid. One of them, however, elicited from me a letter which I should like to place on record, not only as a sample of the squabbling, but in justice to the memory of Keir Hardie, who never could understand that to English gentlemen he as a Socialist was simply an enemy against whom all tactics were lawful, and was consequently disabled and bewildered when advantage was taken in parliament of his simplicity in that respect to make him appear a lying knave and traitor by men who knew better.

I have burlesqued the names of my unofficial critics beyond recognition, as their letters were not intended by them for permanent record, and they have probably by this time forgotten their contentions or reconsidered them in the light of subsequent revelations.

I append also a brief explanation of the Copenhagen incident, as many writers mistake it for one of Nelson's exploits. It occurred after his death, and was one of the results of his victory.

SIR EDWARD GREY AND KEIR HARDIE

(*From The New Statesman of the 28th November 1914*)

Hope springs eternal in the human breast. I had hoped that the correspondence elicited by my Commonsense in *The New Statesman* would have been somewhat less solemnly frivolous than that in the party papers. I am sorry to find that *The Spectator* would be ashamed of most of it.

My friend Mr Chiozza Money, who has done, as his honorable custom is, most valuable public service by his communications to the Press on the subject of the war, complains of my conduct in respect of two statements made by Sir Edward Grey. The first

APPENDIX

was made on the 1st of August, as follows (I transcribe from the penny bluebook, *ci-devant* White Paper, p. 66, No. 123):

"He [the German Ambassador] asked me [Sir Edward Grey] whether, if Germany gave a promise not to violate Belgian neutrality, we would engage to remain neutral.

"I replied that I could not say that; our hands were still free, and we were considering what our attitude should be. All I could say was that our attitude would be determined largely by public opinion here, and that the neutrality of Belgium would appeal very strongly to public opinion here. I did not think that we could give a promise of neutrality on that condition alone.

"The Ambassador pressed me as to whether I could formulate conditions on which we would remain neutral. He even suggested that the integrity of France and her colonies might be guaranteed.

"I said that I felt obliged to refuse definitely any promise to remain neutral on similar terms, and I could only say that we must keep our hands free."

The second statement was made in the House of Commons on August 27th, as quoted by Mr Chiozza Money from Hansard:

"The German Ambassador never suggested to us that Germany would be able to agree to the condition of the neutrality of Belgium."

Now why in the name of every instinct that prompts well-disposed people to refrain from making useless mischief does Mr Chiozza Money drag that apparent Whopper of Sir Edward Grey's into public notice? I said nothing about it: why need Mr Chiozza Money? I do not defend it: it is obviously indefensible; but it is clear to me from the context that Mr Keir Hardie was referring to one occasion and Sir Edward was thinking of another, and that the word "never" was a slip, or rather a careless abbreviation of "never on that occasion." It misled the House of Commons; but then they wanted to be misled. It put Mr Keir Hardie in a painful and apparently false position; but then the House wanted Mr Keir Hardie to be put in a painful position, false or not. Who cares about these debating squabbles now?

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

Has not Sir Edward enough to answer for without having forgotten trifles raked up against him? One would think that my case against oligarchic diplomacy would have satisfied Sir Edward's worst honorable enemy; but here is Mr Chiozza Money dealing him another blow when he is down, and then, lest his action should be supposed to be in support of me, landing me a quite unprovoked backhander on the nose. This seems to indicate a ferocious hatred of the whole human race, a not unnatural result of the embittering horror of war.

Mr Chiozza Money's intervention has, however, done me the service of opening the eyes of Mr A., who accuses me of having said the worst that can be said against Sir Edward, for whom he has the unreasoning adoration of a Briton for a baronet, and of having resorted to every trick of suppression and distortion to make out a case against him. He now, I hope, knows me better. But I make no pretence to sentimental forbearance in dealing with Sir Edward Grey. It is true that I might have painted a lurid picture of the career that began with the sensational infamy of Denshawai, proceeded to the revolting treachery of the Persian affair, and culminated in Armageddon, with the House of Commons circumvented at every step. That is, as a matter of plain admitted fact, the history of our diplomacy under Sir Edward Grey. But it would be the most fatal of mistakes to account for all this as a mere matter of personal fiendishness in the Foreign Secretary. On the contrary, it is my case against oligarchic secret diplomacy (please note that secret diplomacy is necessarily lying diplomacy when questions are allowed in the House of Commons, because it is quite easy to put a question in such a form that a refusal to answer gives away the truth as completely as a confession of it) that even when it is in the hands of a transparently well-intentioned gentleman it will produce more disastrous results than open democratic diplomacy could even if the Foreign Secretary were the greatest rogue unhanged. Consequently, even if I thought Sir Edward such a rogue, which I do not (an ironical Thank you, from Sir Edward), I should still do my best to whitewash him if I cared for nothing but the strength of my case. So

APPENDIX

Mr A. can still go on adoring, provided only he will take care to distinguish between the man and the mischievous machine which has caught him in its murderous cogs, and which, after all, must be worked by somebody until we set up a better one.

I pass to Mr Morally Daft, who demonstrates that our provocation of Germany did not begin until 1895. "After that date" he says "Mr Shaw's statement holds; but the difference between twenty years and forty years is fundamental in an historical analysis." It is still more fundamental in a ready reckoner; and I allow its importance in a sentence of penal servitude. But if Mr Daft means, as I suppose he must mean if his remark has any relevance to the present controversy, that if you provoke Germany for forty years you will alarm and irritate her, whereas if you do it for twenty years you will excite emotions of warm kindness towards you, I cannot agree without thinking a little further over it. But it really does not matter. If Mr Daft will go back forty-three years to an article by Mr Frederic Harrison in the Fortnightly Review, he will see that I might safely have gone further back than The Battle of Dorking for my evidence. I may add that if he would like to see the militarist theory that war is Man's natural state ordained by the law of God, and that we deteriorate the moment we abandon it for the dastardly pursuits of peace, he will find that gospel laid down by the late Sir William Butler with a thoroughness that leaves Treitzschke & Company nowhere. Well may Mr Arnold Bennett claim that when it comes to militarism we can write the heads off all the Germans in Berlin.

I cannot console Miss Wotherspoon: I can but weep with her. Our ingratitude to Russia for being our help in ages past by delivering us from the real original Huns is indeed inexcusable; and now that Miss Wotherspoon makes us blush for the Crimean war, we can do no less than offer Russia a handsome indemnity for having so hideously bitten our benefactor's hand. And to think that Lord Roberts spent most of his life treating Russia as the enemy, and that Mr Rudyard Kipling wrote poems and tales warning us never to trust her! How could they have forgotten

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

those Huns? It must certainly be a great comfort to Miss Wother-spoon that we are at last making some amends by shedding our blood like water to make Russia the most formidable military autocracy in Europe; but she will remind me now that for centuries after the Hun peril had passed away, Austria and Hungary stood between us and the terrible Turk. Think of what we owe to Sobieski, without whose valor we should all now be Christian slaves, tugging painfully at the oar in the galleys of Tripoli and Algiers. Yet we are actually making war on Hungary! Truly we are a hopeless people, flying from one ingratitude to another. And the Germans! All those brave Hessians who won so many laurels for English captains, from Marlborough to Burgoyne! Where would the Protestant religion be without Martin Luther? O Shame, where is thy blush! I acknowledge the rebuke and pass on to the argute Righto Trueblue, Professor of Modern History in the University of Mumbledom.

Alas! university chairs are better for the unreasoning end of the human organism than for the reasoning one. Professor True-blue sets forth in five articles the confusion of his own mind, and taxes me with it. Curious, how few men are capable of analyzing a political situation into its ultimate factors, and how many offer us clumps of arbitrary associations of ideas as simple homogeneous data for our synthesis! It is hopeless to try to unravel the matter for the professor; for he is quite incapable of receiving a statement without inferring from it half a dozen other statements with which it has nothing whatever to do, like a priest who, if you declare to him your disbelief in transubstantiation, wants to have you burnt on the ground that you advocate the stealing of spoons and the hoodooing of Christian babies. I can only say, gently but firmly, that there is no confusion and no contradiction (humanly speaking) in my Commonsense, and that every one of the five dilemmas propounded by the professor are of his own making and not of mine.

However, not to be unhelpful, let me take just one of them, and unmuddle my critic about it. I have said that the treaty of 1839 is not worth the paper it is written on; that we did not go to

APPENDIX

war on the academic point of its validity; that we should have gone to war if it had never existed, or (I now add) if it had solemnly bound us never to draw the sword against Germany; that the nation rose at Sir Edward Grey's declaration of war because it did not want to see Germany smash France, and not in the least because it knew or cared anything about "the scrap of paper"; and finally—here comes in the imaginary contradiction which troubles the professor—that it is our sacred duty to drive the Germans out of Belgium. There is of course no contradiction. The professor, being apparently a man of insular mind, cannot conceive that an Englishman can have any duty towards a mere foreigner except a duty stipulated in a treaty. Hence he concludes that when I deny the validity of the treaty I cannot allege any duty of Britain to Belgium. But I allege the whole duty of man from Britons to Belgians just as much as to one another. I never said that our sacred duty was stipulated in the treaty. If the treaty were proved to be a forgery tomorrow our duty would remain. If Germany proved up to the hilt tomorrow that the Belgian defence was preconcerted and prearranged with the Entente (and indeed as the attack through Belgium was understood and openly taken for granted by all the military authorities for years past, it seems probable, as the King of the Belgians is very far from being a fool, that there was some understanding about the defence), our duty would be all the more binding. Treaty or no treaty, Belgium held the gate for us and saved us at frightful cost to herself on our express intimation that we expected her to do so. All the world would spit in our faces if we did not see her through now, even though all the jurists in Europe held that the treaty was worthless (as in fact they do). That obligation of honor, and not the futile point of law, is the one to recruit on; and recruiting was the practical emergency to which I addressed myself whilst Mr Asquith was trying to rally us round the Scrap of Paper. Belgium is now a word to conjure recruits with, not because of the treaty, but because of the fight she put up and the hideous devastation to which she has been subjected, by our troops and her own as well as by the Germans.

WHAT I REALLY WROTE ABOUT THE WAR

As the *reductio ad absurdum* numbered three in the professor's list looks so neat, let me quote it. "It appears, therefore, that Sir E. Grey caused the war (*a*) by *not* making it clear that we would join France and Russia, and (*b*) by making it clear that we would join France and Russia." It is very much as if I said "Professor Trueblue shewed a want of judgment (*a*) in taking his umbrella, and (*b*) in leaving his umbrella at home." Which sounds absurd, but is quite good sense if *a* refers to a fine day and *b* to a wet day. Both M. Sazonoff and M. Cambon urged that if Sir Edward would only say he was going to fight, the war might be averted. He refused. That was *a*. When war was inevitable, and had indeed to all intents and purposes begun, he shewed his hand. That was *b*. And now who is "a person who condescends to play tricks with facts about a very grave crisis in order to shew off his own cleverness"? Not, I humbly submit,

G. BERNARD SHAW.

BOMBARDMENT OF COPENHAGEN

(*From The Globe of the 4th March 1915*)

The position in 1807 was as follows: Canning discovered that the Treaty of Tilsit contained secret clauses by which Russia and France agreed to force Denmark, Sweden, and Portugal to close their ports and join in the Napoleonic war against us. This meant that Napoleon was about to seize the fleets of these three weak neutral Powers and use them to make good his losses at Trafalgar. There was nothing for it but to be beforehand with him; and Canning promptly sent a fleet under Admiral Gambier, and an army under Lord Cathcart, to bombard Copenhagen until the Danes consented to surrender their fleet to us.

I do not see what else he could have done. I should have done it myself in Canning's place, just as Bethmann-Hollweg would have done it. The *Berliner Tageblatt*, in citing the case, does not offer any adverse criticism. The moral outcry against it exists solely in the imagination of some of your correspondents. But,

APPENDIX

of course, the Berliner Tageblatt means us to infer that our disregard of the neutrality of Denmark deprives us of the right to rebuke Germany for her disregard of the neutrality of Belgium; and to me both incidents demonstrate the unreality, and consequent impracticability, of neutrality.

